# CHARACTERS IN THE GOSPELS,

ILLUSTRATING

## PHASES OF CHARACTER

AT THE

## PRESENT DAY.

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# PREFACE.

The following discourses, with but slight alteration, are printed as they were delivered from the pulpit. I have sufficiently indicated their general purpose in my introductory remarks. Scripture teaches, reproves, and corrects not only by its doctrines and precepts, but by the various personages, both good and evil, who are delineated upon its pages. And while I have selected the most striking traits in each character as typical of classes at the present day, I am not conscious of pressing the analogies too closely.

If the perusal of this little volume shall help any to realize the vivid truthfulness and the perpetual freshness of the Gospel narrative, and to feel how intimately they are related to that human nature which, under so many phases, is involved with the transactions of its sacred his-

tory, and to apply these lessons of warning or example to their own hearts and lives; my hope and my prayer in presenting it to the public will be fulfilled. To such ends may God bless and sanctify it.

E. H. C.

New York, Jan. 1852.

# JOHN THE BAPTIST.

## THE REFORMER.

# CHARACTERS IN THE GOSPELS.

## I.

### JOHN THE BAPTIST—THE REFORMER.

For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

MATTHEW iii. 3.

IN studying history, it is of the highest importance that we should realize the identity of human nature; that the man of the first, or of the tenth century, is essentially the man of the nineteenth; that, admitting modifications of culture, however different the occasion and the scene, the actors are alike. For history could not teach by examples, it could have no practical value, unless the groundwork of character were in all ages the same. But when we are made aware of this—when we feel that in such a case we should have acted thus; that this or that man, whether king or peasant, speaks like ourselves; history is no more an obsolete legend,

or an amusing chronicle, but a solemn mirror which, however remote the perspective, however magnificent the background, reveals the play of our own passions, the conflict of our own vices and virtues, and across which, at times, flits the reflection of our half-conscious and most secret thoughts.

And if this is true as to history in general, it is especially so as to the narratives of the Gospel. In ordinary history, we see human nature in Rome, or Greece, among institutions and forms that have long since crumbled away; but here, it is human nature in contact with Christianity, living and operating to-day as of old in Galilee or Judea. There is not only a common groundwork of character, but of agencies. In the written Gospel Christ still walks the earth, he still urges his claims upon us, and we are in communication with him almost as directly as the Jew or the Greek. And Christianity is treated by us very much as it was treated by Herod or Pilate, by Nicodemus or Peter. It addresses motives and it appeals to dispositions the same as their's who, because so remote, may seem so different.

The personages delineated in the Evangelical records, then, have a peculiarly practical efficacy for us, inasmuch as we are not only identical in nature with the Scribe and Pharisee, the publi-

can and sinner, but, in many respects, our position is the same. They have, also, a peculiar efficacy as exhibiting man in connection with the most important truths, and the most momentous interests.

From these considerations, I have thought proper to invite your attention to a brief series of discourses upon certain personages in the Gospels, each representing or illustrating some phase of human character at the present day. Of course I do not mean that those of whom I may speak were in every respect like those classes which I shall place in apposition. But that they exhibited peculiar traits which suggest and sustain a resemblance.

With this qualification, I proceed, this evening, to speak of *John the Baptist*, who may be considered as representing the *Reformer*.

This great harbinger of Christianity, by both his parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth, was of priestly lineage. Though his birth was attended by peculiar and supernatural circumstances, the details of his earlier years are wholly unknown. It is simply said that he "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel." We might conjecture some of the natural influences which helped prepare him for that mission to which God had elected him. His parentage,

his extraordinary birth, his infancy nurtured under the very shadow of the temple, his youth spent in seclusion, and, perhaps, early intercourse with his greater kinsman, would all tend to foster in him a pious nationality and a vigorous moral life. But, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias Cæsar, just previous to the public ministry of Jesus; at a time when the Jewish mind was agitated by conflicting emotions, stirred by a sentiment of proud independence and of hatred against Rome, and animated with the hope of a Deliverer; when gross formality in religion prevailed side by side with civil violence; in short, when the public feeling hung poised, tremulous, and excitable, just ready to be seized by any fierce passion, or to be roused to a more living piety, a voice was heard like the peal of a trumpet, breaking from the desert country near Hebron, and at length from the banks of the Jordan, crying—"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Thus, heralding the advent of the new Religion, self-denying in his habits, austere and Nazaritish in his whole appearance, John came as that one who, in the words of the text, was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." This appeal shook the land. The people crowded to

his baptism from all quarters, awed and attracted by one in whom they beheld the spirit and power, if not the very person of Elijah; nay, who to the musing and ardent mind of the time, suggested even the Messiah himself. But to all he distributed severe and impartial truth. He hurled rebuke upon the Sadducee and the Pharisee, and sternly called them to repentance. He stripped off every factious claim, and probed every form of corruption with the most stringent moral test. Only once did he falter from this high ground and assume a secondary and deferential position; and that was when there came to be baptized of him, One who, in his purity and dignity, he felt, needed not *his* ministration, and who by an unequivocal sign from heaven, he discovered to be that Great Teacher whose work was far more essential and universal than his own. Only in reference to him did the Baptist wave his prerogatives of Prophet and Reformer. But, as this central Personage rises upon the scene, John retires from our view, and appears only in one or two instances throughout the body of the Gospel Narrative. Yet the power of his mission is very apparent in the reference which is made to his followers, and in the respect which, from fear of the people, the dignitaries of the Jewish nation were obliged to profess for him. Nay, Paul encoun-

tered his doctrines in the distant city of Ephesus, and even now, in Mesopotamia and Persia there is a sect who style themselves "the disciples of John." At the last, we find him in the fortress of Machærus—a martyr to the fidelity with which he had rebuked the guilt of Herod; dying as he had lived—the fearless Messenger of God, and the uncompromising foe of all corruption.

I cannot dwell upon the several points in the character of John. That character, it is true, did not glow with the mild lustre of the Gospel, but was formed after the stern and burning model of old Prophets and Saints: His conceptions of that Messiah whom he came to announce were, in many respects, those of his people, and of his time. This appears especially from the message which he sent to the Saviour towards the close of his own life. "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" It is true there are different interpretations of John's conduct in this instance. Some suppose that his purpose in making the inquiry was not to satisfy himself, but his disciples. But his personal testimony would have sufficed so far as they were concerned, and it appears probable that he was uncertain and troubled in his own mind. Though he may have been intimate with Jesus in the purity of his life, and the won-

der of his character, yet he expressly says that he did not know him officially, until after the signal which was given at the Baptism. And the full nature of that office, I repeat, seems never to have been clear to him. He only knew that it was he who should be made manifest to Israel—not discerning the spirituality of his Mission. Cherishing, then, the views and hopes of a Jew; hearing of the miracles of Christ; lingering in prison and before the very face of death; he naturally longed for a manifestation of the Deliverer, and marvelled that Jesus did not openly declare himself. The answer of our Saviour to his embassage, if it does not contain a mild rebuke, at least applies to such a state of mind. "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me"—"Blessed is he," in other words, "who has faith in me and cherishes a patience consistent with such faith."

But, although, as Christ himself declared, the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John the Baptist, he stands out before us as the bold, earnest, true Reformer. His measure was by no means the popular standard. He rebuked sectarian corruption and national guilt. He tore away the conceit that mere lineage entitled the Son of Abraham to membership in the approaching Kingdom, and set that claim upon moral grounds alone. He shrunk from

any dignity that did not belong to him. He always deferred to the Coming One, whose shoe-latchet he deemed himself not worthy to unloose. And when his disciples told him of the Saviour's success, with a beautiful humility, he replied—"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.—He must increase, but I must decrease." But surely he needs no other eulogium whose memory is glorified by the praise of Christ; whom he described as no voluptuous parasite, no reed shaken by the wind; but as a Prophet, and more than a Prophet—as his own herald in disturbing a stagnant formality, and breaking up the ground of habit, and as one who, in a corrupt and darkened generation, was "a burning and a shining light."

Although, then, John stands apart from all other men in his peculiar relations to the Messiah, yet he represents the Reformer—a term which we apply to a class who have appeared, it is probable, in almost every age, but who are especially active and prominent in our own. And although, from this fact, a great deal has been said about "Reform" and "Reformers," this very fact also lends a peculiar interest to the topic considered from a religious point of view—considered in the light of Christianity. Christianity has some point of contact with

these distinct and busy organizations—it affects them, and is affected by them—it has something to say for or against them.

In this light, then, let me observe, in the first place, that *Reform is legitimate.* It is so, in accordance with the general law of improvement, and with the fact that there is a tendency in the course of time to corrupt principles and institutions, so that, previous to the period of reformation, their first estate is the best. "He that will not apply new remedies," says Lord Bacon, "must expect new evils; for time is the greatest innovator; and if time, of course, alter things to the worse, and wisdom and counsel shall not alter them to the better, what shall be the end?" Therefore, there is always work for the Reformer to do, either in restoring, or in up-building, for reform is as legitimate as the elements of growth and purification. Whenever a national institution, a social form, a religious system, has attained absolute maturity, so that it can unfold nothing better, it must die. Whenever it has lost all recuperative vigor, it is sentenced and worn out, as an old man, or a diseased body. For, in this world there is no climax of rest or conservation. Through everything, from a leaf to a planet, from the individual to the state, motion is the law—motion, either by way of growth or decay, of renova-

tion or destruction. My remarks, however, at this time will, principally, contemplate Reform as a work of progress and amelioration.

I remark, then, that the cry which is sometimes raised against reforms—the cry, "Let alone! things are well enough as they are"—is as foolish as it is feeble. This let-alone philosophy is no more reasonable at the present day than it was when first enunciated; and if it had been heeded then, where would the world be now? It is unavailing—for reformation is a law of the Universe, operating as irresistibly as gravitation or the tides. An Omnipotent Providence is implicated with its march; and so it works on, levelling and lifting up, grinding down opposition, changing the face of history, and unconsciously shifting the very ground beneath our feet. The abstraction of one age becomes the familiar instrument of another, the startling theory an undisputed fact; and they who occupy the extremest post of conservatism stand upon the ramparts of an obsolete heresy.

A very common opposition to Reform, nevertheless, springs from a kind of *Quietism*, that shrinks with dread and disgust from all agitations and conceits. This is often the case with men of refined tastes and literary culture. They are aloft in the region of thought, above the dust and jar of the street. They see truth in

its absolute relations, and have but little sympathy with these partial and changeful theories. They are in communion with the past in its mellow serenity and its ripe results, and dislike the crudity of the present. They are sensitive, and recoil from these abrupt and angular forces. They have a clear insight, and see all the objections that are involved. They perceive the ludicrous side of things, and are ready with a cynical sneer, or a pleasant jest. They laugh at all this noise about "Liberty and Equality"—at tri-colored cockades and temperance medals. But Quietism finds room, also, in a very different quarter—among comfortable men with plenty of beef and coal, whose ideas are not the most fruitful, and whose mental perception is somewhat misty, but who hold tight to what they do see—who make up in obstinacy what they lack in knowledge, and with whom strong assertion stands in lieu of logic. Fenced in as they are against sharp necessities, and well to do in the world, they cannot discern the use of all this agitation—they do not see but things are as near right as they can be, and they class together and denounce all reformers indiscriminately, as "radicals" and "fanatics." And yet, perhaps one rod from the Quietist thinker, or the Quietist eater, some pale mother drains the last drop of sustenance to moisten the lips

of a dying infant; some husband and father reels home like a demon to his trembling and destitute family, some child's soul is seething in the lowest pit of evil, some woman's heart of virtue is struggling between gold and despair, some man is buffeted by starvation into crime, and all around a tempted and paralytic humanity sends up inarticulate groans to heaven. Ah! men with cool heads and fat larders can philosophize and denounce; but it is a different thing with those upon whom misery presses with a cincture of iron, through whose veins passion runs like lava, for whom in their moral weakness vice opens its doors, and whose heads are canopied with curses. And we can easily see why some who have witnessed these and other forms of guilt and wrong, *will* agitate—*will* cry out "Reform!" And if others would drop the kaleidoscope of curious speculation and look around with their naked eyes—if they would turn from their faces in the cheerful fire to the faces in the crowd—they too, perhaps, would find some justification for reform. If not, I think the veriest fanatic of change, with all his vituperation and eccentricity, who still feels stirred to speak for humanity, has a heart more akin to the great Baptist, nay, to him who, with a gentler spirit, lifted up the suffering and bore the woes of man in his all-loving breast, than

those who have wrought themselves into a selfish indifference, or who marvel and denounce in easy chairs.

But the course of Reform is blocked not merely by Quietism. *Self-interest* is a more virulent adversary. These sharp discussions and terrible "first principles," endanger vested rights and gainful customs. After all, it is Mammon that rules in this hour of the world, and takes its stand upon the past and the established. Mammon with its hundred hands and Argus eyes. Mammon with its bristling ports and smoking furnaces, its countless acres of cotton and of corn. It has levelled the castles and stripped off the armor of the feudal baron, and controls the earth with its sceptre of iron and of fire. With all the good to which money may be the incentive, surely it is the vital element of much that is evil. It is this that rules so mightily in halls of legislation, and draws or sheaths the sword of battle, and knots the slave-whip, and rents brothels, and keeps open gin-shops. It is this that heaps up graveyards in London until the dead ooze through the soil, and that crams New-York with vice until it plagues the very air. Reformer! you require indeed the vigor of him who came with raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle, in order that you may grapple with this steel-

hardened, golden-headed power. Do you think to force away these vested rights with abstractions? Will you try to shut up gambling-saloons and bar-rooms, with the plea of "humanity?" Shall the Apostle Paul preach on board a slave-ship, or Christ be heard on a field of battle? No: Money is the ideal. Interest makes right. Those beautiful lessons—"Love one another"—"All men are brethren"—"God is the Father of all"—are very well for Sundays and for the Fourth of July; but, surely, they were never meant for practical application—especially, where they touch our gain. If reform involves pecuniary loss, if estates do not flourish so well in the West Indies, or buildings do not rent so high in New-York, that argument is sufficient. To all this the Reformer can reply—"There is a higher scale of value in God's universe than dollars and cents. There is an *absolute* Right, and all conventional falsehoods must shrivel before it. There is a Kingdom of Heaven, and it shall yet come in the earth. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

But objections which are urged against these special and organized Reforms from a *Religious* point of view, are worthy of different consideration. For instance, it is said that Reforms must begin from within, and not from without; that individual holiness is the germ of all exter-

nal and social good. And nothing is more true than that all reforms are superficial and incomplete without personal regeneration. Still, there is utility in working both from the circumference and the centre. Sometimes, it is necessary to break up a crust of bodily suffering and of mental ignorance, in order that the way to the heart may be cleared for spiritual influences. This appears to have been one of Christ's methods. He hearkened to the cry of pain, he touched the blind eye and the withered limb, as the most pressing necessity, and leaving these benefits to do their work as spiritual agents. And they accomplished that work. The unsealed eye turned to him and discovered more than a temporal Deliverer. The cured leper was smitten with gratitude, and returned to praise. Thus, temporal benefits induced religious results. And so it may prove with the achievements of modern reform. The poor, the down-trodden, and the ignorant, cry for relief from their most pressing wants—from that evil of which, for the time, they are the most vividly conscious. And in lifting their burden, we leave the spirit free to holier ministries. Nay, in that very work of up-lifting and of temporal relief, we touch the springs of religious influence.

But, again, it may be said that the objects of

those reforms are well enough; but that the *mode* is objectionable; that these separate and specific organizations are performing nothing more than the legitimate work of the Church, and therefore a work which should be done only in its name, and from its sanctions. Now I will not pause to discuss the lawful sphere of the Church; but I would observe that no good work is foreign to the interests of Religion. When Christ was told of one who had performed miracles though he was not one of his followers, he replied—"Forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." Perhaps, if the Church would thoroughly perform its mission, these separate movements would not be needed. But they are needed. And shall we forbid those who apply the Spirit of Christ to the wants of the world, in any way, because they adopt an independent form? There cannot be too many agencies of Christianity. They are all its co-workers, and not its rivals.

Still, something is to be said on the other side. And, first, in reference to the connection between Reform and Religion. I observe, then, that if any one exaggerates the claims of Reform—if he maintains it as a substitute for Christianity, and as an improvement upon it—he attributes to the stream the virtues of the

fountain; he ascribes to the arteries the central function of the heart. For, from Christianity beats the great pulse of this world's hope. There are times, even now, when a good man's trust will totter as he contemplates the colossal forms of wrong—as he beholds the mystery of iniquity sweeping forward. And he requires something stronger than speculation, or intuition, to fix his confidence. He needs to feel that the promises in this old Book are not fictitious—he needs the hope which springs out of the fact that Christ has walked our earth and shown us the Omnipotence of Goodness and the Face of God. And from this the noblest reformers have gathered their strength. Custom is strong, policy is strong, and the power of money is strong. Sin, like a swart Cyclops, ever busy, forges no unskilful weapons, and those which must meet these—the shield of Faith and the sword of Prayer—can be drawn from no terrestrial armory.

Nor should we, on the other hand, regard Christianity as nothing more than a system of Reform. I use the word in its ordinary acceptation. The whole of Christianity is not expressed in social duty, or in temporal relief. A man may be a Reformer, and yet not completely a Christian. We have responsibilities Godward as well as man-ward. We are under obligations to our own souls as well as to the world.

And perhaps there is a tendency in our modern reforms to draw away the individual from his own personality, and to absorb him in the mass, so that he is led to consider Religion and social duty as exact equivalents, and that the whole order of life is but a manual of benevolent deeds. Thus he is attracted from the discipline of his own heart, from private meditation, obedience, and prayer. I know it is said that we not only show love to God, but best nourish that love, by loving man; but this only proves that these sentiments are reciprocal; and if a lack of outward indicates a lack of upward love, neither, on the other hand, can our affections become expansive without being reverent and intense. John the Baptist mused in the desert before he went into the crowd. It was the voice of one who knew well his own soul, that cried so earnestly to others—"Repent!" Indeed, one must have this personal, religious vitality, this inner strength, continually renewed before he can truly lift up others; ere he can cherish genuine courage, humility, and fortitude. The experience of his heart must be the life of his work. He must pluck the beam from his own eye, or he cannot see clearly to take out the mote from his brother's. I do not say this to encourage selfishness even as to personal salvation, or to contribute a plea for indolent and

disingenuous conservatism. But I utter it as a truth that is much needed in our age of associated action and outward bustle—an age which has so much to say about "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," that we are likely to lean out too far from our own personality, and from the real centre of all true reform—personal religion. And, while every genuine reformer is religious, I repeat, Religion is something more than Reform. Reform would bind man to man; Religion would likewise reconcile man to God. Reform seeks to adjust man to the world; Religion would lift him above it. Reform would deliver him from poverty and oppression; Religion enables him to bear these—yea, to wring strength from weakness, and riches from misfortune, and victory from death. John the Baptist was but the herald of the Redeemer, and, in some respects—contrasting Reform with Christianity as a whole—we may say—"It is not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light."

But other strictures may be applied to some of our modern Reformers. In the first place, their work appears to be, in the main, destructive. They are zealous for dislocating, and tearing down; but exhibit no plan of edification. As Carlyle says of Voltaire, they have "a torch for burning, but no hammer for building." Now

the great idea involved in the very word—"Reform," is not de-struction but con-struction. Not only the removal of a thing, but the substitution of something better. Men will stick by an established wrong, rather than cast loose upon uncertainties.

Again, Reform may become a bigoted and exclusive affair—a mere cant-word. It may be set forth as though it were all, and must be accomplished to the hazard of everything else. But there *are* other claims. And when Reform is dinned into our ears, without regard to place or time, it nauseates. By a law of our nature, we grow sick of reiteration and extremes, in almost any instance; and then re-action takes place. Besides, our Reformers sometimes get cross and abusive. They seem not to perceive that radical changes cannot be rapid—that no reformation can be abrupt—but they fret and rail at opposition, and express their love and good-will snappingly. The milk of their philanthropy is mixed with vinegar. Certainly, truth should be strenuous and bold; but the strongest things are not always the noisiest, as any one may see who compares scolding with logic. They are apt to be uncharitable, too, and unjust. They judge motives, and hastily conclude that every one who does not work in their way is a time-server, or is bribed by his fat position. Ap-

parently, they do not consider that conduct is not always a test of the degree of depravity. They should allow for a man's moral standpoint. He may not see just as they do. He may be under influences of education and of temperament, which they do not recognise. Because he does this, or that, it does not necessarily follow that he is shamelessly wicked, but only, perhaps, that his moral plane is not high, or broad, or free from an unconscious bias of self-interest. A man's judgment, too, may differ from theirs without casting an imputation upon his character, or his actual readiness to do good. The Reformer, too, sometimes becomes teasing and microscopic in his scruples; pompous, all-sufficient, and irreverent. Sometimes he takes a little to eccentricity, apparently as a wholesome rebuke to society, or an expression of his spontaneity and contempt. But simple-mindedness and self-reliance are not necessarily associated with an outlandish tunic or a long beard, and such things may remind us of Diogenes on Plato's carpet.

But, after we have exhausted all our criticism, still remains the legitimacy of true, earnest, upbuilding Reform. Still we feel that men are needed who shall tread in the steps of John the Baptist. If we ascend into the region of the absolute, we may detect some fault in every

merely human character—some excess here, some defect there. But when we consider such a character in its relative bearings, we may discern its fitness in being just what it is. "Wisdom is justified of all her children," said Jesus. So we should expect that the Reformer's character will be somewhat angular and harsh, for he has to rub against sharp points. We should expect that his blows would be hard, for he has to strike upon stubborn oppositions. Your finical man, can do but little in piercing the thick-skinned indifference and selfishness of the world. God's work is carried on by oscillations; now the truth swings to this extreme, now to that; and between, He weaves His steady and perfect plan. The Reformer must press his point strongly in order to arouse attention. It will not do to whine, or plead, or go mincingly. He feels that he must fire no blank cartridges, but bullets. He has no time to weigh and smooth his speech. Every sentence must be a volley, and every word a shot. As for the great Baptist, he was radical in his work. He did not dally with things. He was for laying "the axe at the root of the tree." He did not temporize. He spoke of the sins of his own age. Nor was his speech vague and general. He spoke directly to the people, to the publicans, to the soldiers. He turned to the

Pharisees and the Sadducees, and exclaimed,—"O generation of vipers!" He rebuked a king—though he died for it—and said—"It is not lawful for thee to have her."

If such, then, is the character of true Reform, what relation has it to us? How are we affected by the movements of the present age? Do we recognise their claims upon us; or do we stand apart in a cold and isolated selfishness? Do we throw up against the march of human melioration our own interests and sins?

Or, if we are engaged in helping forward these Reforms, do we realize that the profoundest reformation is personal? Nay, that we can give to others only what we have in ourselves? Have we heard that voice, as it were, crying to us from the wilderness, and saying, "Repent"—and, by heeding it, have we endeavored in ourselves to advance the Kingdom of Heaven?

# HEROD:

## THE SENSUALIST.

## II.

### HEROD: THE SENSUALIST.

—Herod being tetrarch of Galilee.
LUKE iii. 1.

THE personage spoken of here was Herod Antipas, the son of that Herod who slew the innocents, and who is known in history as "Herod the Great." The dominions of the latter were divided at his death, when the elder brother, Archelaus, received the kingdom of Judea, and Antipas the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea. Antipas, however, was dissatisfied with this allotment, being desirous of the kingly title, which at one time his father had intended to bequeath him. Accordingly, he went to Rome for the purpose of supplanting Archelaus. But his efforts proved ineffectual, and the testament of Herod the Great was sustained by the Emperor Augustus. It was during this journey that he met and became enamored of Herodias, the wife of his half-brother, Herod-Philip. Upon his return home he married her, she, in violation of

the Jewish law, divorcing her first husband. Herod himself was already married to the daughter of Aretas, an Arabian prince, who, justly indignant at this new connection, left his court, and returned to her father. This conduct, with some other disputes, created a war between Herod and Aretas, in which the former was forced to apply for the help of the Romans. It is hardly necessary to say that this also was the act for which John the Baptist rebuked Herod, and which cost the brave Reformer his liberty and his life. This, however, was not the only case in which Herodias was his evil genius. Stung with envy at the royal honors bestowed upon her own brother, Herod Agrippa, she incited Antipas to undertake another journey to Rome for the purpose of obtaining the kingly title. Agrippa, however, not only defeated his object, but preferred against him charges of treason. Antipas was stripped of his possessions, banished to Lyons, and finally into Spain, where he died.

In the Gospels, Herod appears in connection both with John and with Jesus. His conduct with the former has already been referred to. Our Savior, as belonging to Galilee, was brought before him just previous to his crucifixion. In these instances we catch but glimpses of him, to be sure ; yet they are sufficient to betray cer-

tain prominent and unmistakable lineaments of character. He is not, perhaps, to be styled a monster of wickedness, nor was his temper so ferocious and stern as that of his great father—great in achievements and in crime. He would appear rather, to have been of an easy and luxurious disposition, lacking in moral courage and in energy, yet when aroused by the solicitations of voluptuousness, or of ambition, capable of great enterprises and of cruel deeds. He was not without intellectual sharpness and some moral sense; but on the whole, he stands as a full illustration of that class of men whose motives are of the flesh and the world; who, regardless of conscience, or of the verities of religion, swing at impulse; who, jarred, it may be, for a moment by some serious thought or flushed by better feelings, live as creatures of passion and as beings of the hour. In short, Herod was a *Sensualist.* His highest law was lust. In obedience to this, he plotted and he loved, he revelled and he slew, he mingled blood and wine. As passion prompted, he tore asunder the most sacred relations, he mocked at the most serious things, he disregarded the best man's life. In the ease of luxury and of temperament, he may have exhibited generous qualities, but these would seem to have been merely impulsive. Luke refers to many evils which he had done. He wore the light

robes of the Epicurean over red hands and a voluptuous heart. It is probable that he was a Sadducee, recognising no good for man higher than this earth, and drawing no sanction and no hope from beyond the grave.

Herod, then, fitly represents the Sensualist. Not that each one of this class exactly resembles him, or that he was in every respect like any other. The general term *Sensualism* comprehends a variety—all those who are fascinated by the mere externals of life; and all those in whom the higher nature has sunk down into the appetites, until they have actually become assimilated to the gross materiality of the world; deadened and impotent portions of its dust and its mire. It shows itself after the type of Tiberias and after the type of Rousseau. Now it is joined to a sophistical sentimentalism, and now it is the avowed conclusion of a desperate and skeptical philosophy. There it is the coarse pleasure of an animal nature, here the headlong reaction of a strong intellect and a perverted will. It blossoms in an exuberant greenness and an exuberant rowdyism. The school-boy of to-day, to-morrow emerges from the chrysalis of satchel and apron, a butterfly of fashionable vice and impudence, cane, cigar, moustache, and all, ambitious of a town reputation, and striving with gosling audacity to imitate the manners of an

adept. And then come a large class who alternate between a swift horse and a brandy-bottle—who, in fact, present a parody or perversion of true life. For they subvert reason and crown the appetites. They give their evanescent thoughts to serious matters and their most strenuous efforts to light ones. While, with an eccentricity apparent in no other object in nature except the night-blooming Cereus, they open at dark and keep shady during the day—rounding off what they call "*life*", by lopping against the lamp-posts at midnight and going to bed with a headache in the morning.

The great danger of sensualism exists in its association with other elements which, while they temper its grossness, do not alter its essential nature nor prevent its control. Thus we know that it is often mixed with many generous qualities, and that the very impulses which plunge a man into vice appear with a free heart and an open hand. And if we set off this copious good humor against some sour, scrimping, granite-faced specimen of self-righteousness, it may compare favorably. But we perceive the difference between a genuine virtue and that salient impulsiveness, that flabby sentimentalism, which may consort with a sensual habit. We find that the good nature of such a man is slipshod, his kindness is the fermentation of feelings

that have grown mellow with the hour, and, in fine, the real nature of sensualism is betrayed in a "good heartedness" that vibrates between jollity and the irritability of unstrung nerves, that pours out all its gaiety in boon-companionship and brings to the hearth-stone the lees of debauch.

Again, sensualism exhibits a most sad and deceptive phase when it is blended with great intellectual qualities. From the fact that men are indisposed to think evil of those who have interested and delighted them, and whose names are house-hold words upon their lips, and because, for the time at least, defects of character are lost in the splendor of performance, combined with the too common connection between rare talents and self-indulgence, sensualism has come to be regarded as almost congenital with a gifted intellect—as one of those "infirmities" which genius transmutes and glorifies, instead of a despotic fault by which it is dragged down and dethroned. Many a stripling considers his excesses as the crackling of the ethereal flame, the dross of inspiration, and as essential to the part which he has assumed as the "eye in a fine frenzy rolling." It generally happens, however, that his achievements are limited to the darker hemisphere of genius. He exhibits little of Sheridan save his recklessness, and nothing of

Byron except the gin and water. It has been said that "the defects of great men are the consolation of the dunces." But they are also the sorrow of the truly wise, who in the very proportions of the achievement detect the greatness of the aberration. And it is idle to say that there is any necessary connection between the achievement and the aberration. While Milton sings to us from the gates of Paradise, we know that the essential inspiration of genius flows not from turbid fountains, and while Newton treads upward among the stars, it is evident that might and comprehensiveness of mind need not the feculent leaven of passion.

Nay, as the great man is not always the complete man, neither is genius in slavery to sense transcendent genius. The head of Jupiter does not glorify the frame of Silenus, but makes a more hideous deformity. If angels stoop from visions of more than earthly beauty to spells of less than earthly worth, they are but fallen angels, mingling divine utterances with the babblings of madness, and the madness is not the divineness. And often this is distinguished from normal genius by the uses to which it turns its power. The one employs imagination to create foul thoughts and unseemly symbols even from things most innocent. The other draws a pregnant moral from the most insignificant objects,

reveals beauty in the homeliest forms, and lights up the waste places of our humanity with hope and with faith. In the one case, imagination rises like smoke from the pit, enveloping all things with a lurid splendor, and distorting them into prurient shapes. In the other, it falls like dew from heaven, enriching the most common and glorifying the most obscure. In the one instance it mounts above the taint and fetter of sense with a joyful liberty; in the other, its awful power is infected and taken captive by its associations. And, when we consider the noble natures which it has disguised with beggary, the strength which it has dissolved into a pitiful weakness, the wit whose sparkles it has quenched upon desolate death-beds, the eloquence that it has struck into madness, the right royal reason which it has tricked out with a fantastical folly, like Lear with his garland, the imperial light of intellect cannot blind us to the essential servility of that spirit over which appetite extends its fiery leash. The very brightness of the flame, shows more awful the ruin and desecration of the shrine.

It is hardly necessary to say that sensualism is consistent with refined tastes and habits. Indeed, it is apt to be rife among two classes—the very lowest and the very highest. On the one hand, the motives to enterprise being clog-

ged by plenty, nothing occupies the mind but luxurious desires. On the other, the springs of exertion being paralyzed by despair, man sinks sullenly into the brute. But, while I would uphold no invidious distinctions, and charge nothing upon *classes*, as such, I may be permitted to say that the chief danger to society, in this direction, comes not from the rank and festering dens of cities, not from the loathsome spawn that clings to the great hull of the ship of state, but from those whose propriety is but the thin foil of conventionalism, and whose morality is only the exhalation of an æsthetic culture. The most dangerous forms of sensualism are not wrapped in vulgarity, but tread upon soft carpets and breathe perfumed air. It lurks in idleness, luxury, and facile customs. Of all sensualists the worst is that moral sepulchre within whose gilded exterior the life of principle has crumbled darkly away, the man whose tiger-propensities are disguised with a velvet tread and a silver tongue—whose real nature, into which has entered the curse of withered innocence and broken hearts, is hidden by the glitter of accomplishments, and each accomplishment a treacherous lie.

With individuals and with nations the very extreme of refinement is often the hectic of moral disease—the flush through which ripeness

passes into rottenness. Sometimes, the man has been too much *educated*, drawn out into mere attitude and expression, so that there is not left in him core enough for virtue to grow upon. In the thoroughness of his rebound from swinish ignorance and coarseness, he has gone clear around the circle, and returned to the point of sensualism again, upon a higher plane, but in a degree no less intense. His whole nature has refined itself away, until he has become in life a mere taster and percipient.

And, yet once more, Sensualism is compatible with a kind of *moral sensitiveness*. But this is vague and fitful. We are told that Herod recognised the excellence of John, and he seems to have been somewhat moved by his appeals. Certainly. The Sensualist honors virtue—he respects goodness; though in a very abstract way. Yet it exerts but little influence against the force of habit and the head-tide of passion. Perhaps as Herod looked upon that stern prophet, with his coat of camel's hair, and his leathern girdle, he felt for a moment how much more royal was John with the might of virtue and the majesty of truth, than himself with his throne of power and his palace of ease. But the next glance of beauty, the next flow of wine, swept all this away. And thus it often is with a man of this class. There are times when

virtue beams upon him with something of its true glory, and he feels the excellence of that better way and the guilt and folly of his own course. He goes to church. He is moved by the discourse. He weeps. But it takes no vital hold of him. It passes like a wave across his impulsive nature. And, in fact, the real object of his being in that place is indistinct or unknown to him. He goes there, perhaps, because he has no where else to spend the time. Or he goes out of respect to some old habit. Perhaps some mother's memory leads him there. He cannot throw off that gentle restraint. The Sabbath morning will not look to him like any other. He cannot on that day, plunge without some faint reluctance into any pursuit. He thinks of the old days at home. He recalls the fragments of a prayer; he looks vaguely over a neglected bible; and he turns his feet towards the church. Or he goes there to be amused—to have his intellect excited and his ear tickled—to enjoy the pungency of satire, the cogency of logic, or the sweep of eloquence—as he would go, next day, to the theatre. He has no religious interest in the services. His thought does not rise with the prayer, but wanders abroad while it is uttered, and he is glad when it is done. He does not realize the themes of the preacher in their practical and personal ap-

plications. He does not listen as a thirsty spirit for the purling of Siloa's fountains—as a sinner needing salvation. No humility, no penitence, no strong uplifted resolutions, mark his experience in the church. I repeat, he comes to be amused; and as to the great realities of Religion, they have no more place in his daily life, no more vividness to his soul's vision, than the peculiarities of some distant planet. Nay, perhaps he cannot make much of Religion any way; and finds it convenient to jest and cavil at what he does not or will not understand. This was the case with Herod. Christ stood before him, and he was glad—glad, not because he felt that he was the Great Teacher, the Redeemer who could deliver even him, the guilty king, the adulterous kinsman, the blood-stained despot, from his sin, and give him the blessing of immutable peace and the treasure of eternal life—but because he had heard much of him, and hoped to see some wonder wrought by him. There he sat—the great Herod, quite ready to be amused. Ready to see any new thing that might be done in this old world. Patronising and condescending with his hard, sensual eyes. But with no consciousness as to *who* stood before him—of *what* he could do—of the real opportunity that was thus afforded him. He could make nothing of that majestic Peasant. He

could not see into that grand and holy realm of thought which beamed from the meek countenance of Jesus and sealed his lips. So he and his soldiers mocked him, arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him back to Pilate. The feelings which the Sensualist entertains for Religion, and his conceptions of it, often turn out like this. A decent observance, and a few fitful deeds of kindness, cannot hide the essential evil which enthrals him. If it be true that, upon some points, he cherishes a quick sense of honor, it is not held in deference to the absolute right, but to a conventional standard. Herod was one of these "men of honor." He kept his oath. But it was a bloody oath, and he kept it in spite of remorse. Still, in the ecstacy of voluptuous impulse he had spoken it, and when with a reeling brain he looked around upon the rough and sneering faces at his table, he dared not recall it, and he carried it out though it took off the head of an innocent and holy man. How much respect, then, to absolute principle was there in Herod's conduct? Thus, often, the honor of the sensualist is an honor that he holds not from any moral sanction, but in fear of his associates and of the customs of his class. It is the principle of the duellist and the gamester. He will pay his "debts of honor," but at the expense of how many other obligations? At

the expense of what pledges and duties—of what claims that bind him as a husband and a father, of what dear affections and what sacred things? All these count as nothing with our man of honor. But could the gaming-saloon bear witness to the way in which these debts of honor are paid, and testify of all the cost, methinks every beam in the gorgeous ceiling would utter a groan, and the pictured walls would break out with a ghastly sweat.

But, under all these modifications of sensualism, there appears a certain general character, which assigns the same grouping to those whose exterior life is wide apart. In every form of it, the higher life defers to the lower; to the passions of the flesh and the dominion of the world. Now it is not necessary to say, that the appetites have a lawful sphere. They acquire an unnatural vivacity under a microscopic scrutiny, or morbid repression, as well as in the sweep of indulgence. The Ascetic errs as much as the Sybarite. We must render to the sensual sphere of existence that which belongs to it. But the evil with the sensualist is this—he recognises no superior claim, whether it speaks from his own nature, or from above. His ideal corresponds with his actual. That which his heart conceives he realizes. The bounding pulses of desire are sated with

instant gratification. Sensualism too, is essentially selfish. It is selfishness in a compound degree—selfishness within self, casting down and consuming the very nature in which it abides. The fair qualities with which it may be associated at any time, have no root of stability—no gift of genius will it not pervert—no generous sentiment will it not disgrace. In fine, as the crowning trait of the sensualist, he lacks faith in the great idea of self-discipline—faith that the despotism of the body should not, and, if we will, cannot conquer spiritual force. In his view of things, all sanctions stand secondary to inclination; impulse is instinct, and passion is law, and life runs in the grooves of a blind necessity. Under every garb a broad line distinguishes him from the man who lives with the true aim of existence. Sleeping upon roses, or grovelling at the chariot-wheels, he is still a pitiful slave; while the other is an Olympian, not yet victorious, but striving, leaping from the dust and contending for the mastery.

But, in treating of Sensualism, we are to consider not merely what it is intrinsically, or as it appears to the world, but as it affects the Sensualist himself. I remark, then, that there are likely to occur periods when, to some degree, he will be awakened to a consciousness of his condition. Even with him, life will not

prove an uninterrupted holiday. His pleasures will sometimes grow tasteless, and bitterness lurk in his draught. For, it is idle to deny that the Sensualist has enjoyment, in his way. But we have seen how it is pursued in disregard to higher claims, and consists in the gratification of mere impulse and passion. And the sensualist cannot entirely rid himself of his manhood. If he neglects the great purpose of his being, he cannot do so without remonstrance. He has a moral nature, fitful as are its manifestations. He has some faith in an immortal world, boastful as may be his skepticism. He has to argue down his conscience with sophistries; he has to smother it with jests. He plunges recklessly from its sharp entreaties into gratification. It would not do for him to stop and listen. He does not wish to hear *that* voice. And just in proportion as his mind has been cultivated, and his moral sense enlightened, he must struggle ere he can become the absolute slave of self-indulgence. Nay, perhaps we may say he never becomes so. He is never wholly at ease; never feels that it is quite right to live as though passion were the highest law, and the world and the flesh all. And, in addition to this general uneasiness, there are times when he will be startled at the great realities of existence—times when the thought of God and duty, of wasted hours

and evil deeds, will rise up and appal him. Nothing in the whole history of Herod is more striking, than that exclamation which burst from his lips—"It is John!" Epicurean as he was, Sadducee as he professed to be, those three words laid bare the secret of his soul. In a moment of impulse, he had killed one whom he had acknowledged to be "a just man and a holy." Apparently, his temporary regret was drowned in revelry and wine. But the deed stuck fast in his memory, and kept rallying his flagging conscience; and, though he denied all faith in a future life, when he heard of the miracles wrought by Jesus, see how his moral nature vindicated itself—see the ghost that haunted his soul starting out into vivid shape! "It is John!" exclaims he, "It is John! he hath risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show themselves in him." No: to say nothing of bodily evils—of wasted strength, racking disease, and premature death, when we look into the moral life of the Sensualist, fearfully evident is it that he does not live with impunity.

Sensualism, as involved in the philosophy of materialism, or as an abstract expression of the idea of human life, hardly requires confutation. The naturalist protests against the encroachment of the metaphysical or theological bias upon the domain of science. On the other hand,

we repel any imperious assumptions of science in the profounder regions of the soul. The great facts that lie at the foundations of morals and religion, are not to be decided by callipers and dissecting-knife. There are phenomena in our being not revealed in the "gospel of digestion"—there are tides and currents in human nature not mapped out on the globe of the brain. It has been well said that "the soul is larger than logic." Not only is it cognizant of the objective world—the world of rock and bone, and quivering nerve and fluid light—but it lies in a hemisphere of intuition, whose solemn sweeps of darkness are pierced by immortal splendors. And, despite all the cant of "positive philosophy," and all quibbles about design, it retains, and ever will retain, the spontaneous conviction that these harmonious forms spring from an interior idea; that within this universal frame abides living spirit, moving it to a purpose, and this way and that turning its flashing wheels. But, as we have seen, there is no argument against the sensual conception of life stronger than that which springs up in the Sensualist's own experience, in his endeavors to reason out his position, in his attempts at self-justification, in a night-mare consciousness of incongruity, in the lightning-streams of recollection. And, even when sunk below all this, still, there is

wanting the ease of nature and organic fitness —still there is the sense of lacking sense—the dreary sense of paralysis and loss. Like one who lies down in torpor among the dead, he is not as the dead. They rest peacefully. But he slumbers in a vague horror, or wakes startled by ghastly shadows and the texts on the tombs.

Suppose, from the comparative moderation of his indulgences, or the hardihood of his constitution, he is spared until late in life—peculiarly sad and awful must be the *old age* of the Sensualist. At that period, when a man's hold upon outward things grows infirm, his spirit may fall back upon its own resources, and the treasures of wisdom and the recollections of vanished times are ranged around those inner galleries fresh and fragrant still. Nor is his age a useless burden to others. He remains yet, to enrich the world he is about to leave with the lesson of a virtuous example and the legacies of a ripe experience; while faith lends a new beauty to his gray hairs, and from out its dim windows the soul sends flashes of perpetual youth. But upon what can the worn out sensualist fall back? What riches cluster about his heart that are fadeless yet? What memories can he call up that he would not rather have buried for ever? What useful boon does he bequeath to the world

from which his feet are slipping? Alas! the great shadows are falling around him. Years have swept away the companions of his pleasure. Yet he spends his last hours in teasing his senses into a paralytic zest, and the flame of passion, impotent and smouldering, is the only lamp to light him through the dark valley.

For, finally must come the *death* of the Sensualist. His heart, that has been decaying for years, halts at last. The abused temple of his body grows livid and cold. The end of all he has delighted in is at hand. His mind in fitful visions quits the racked frame, and goes wandering back into that sunny world which to him has been so luxurious and which he shall see no more—or it starts upward to those great realities which he has treated as dreams and fictions. Few are there to close his dying lids; for sensualism is selfish. His true friends he has neglected, he has cast from him. The associates of his gay hours do not like death-beds and trouble. Read the last moments of one of England's most gifted sons; racked with disease, sick at heart, steeped in poverty, seized in the very blankets in which he lay dying, to be carried to a jail—while of those who had mixed with him in sparkling merriment, who had laughed at his jests, who had admired his talents, who had used his services, scarce one helped him, or saw

him until it was too late. When all was over, and nothing required but outside show, then came a splendid funeral, and princes followed to the grave the statesman, orator, and wit. Such are the consolations of the dying sensualist—such the value of the things in which he has delighted and the friendships he has made.

Not only should we consider the positive results of sensualism; but what is lost by it, the true enjoyment of life, the best use of its hours, and the transcendent vision and the blessed consciousness which look beyond and overcome the world and all its evils. This is the fallacy that attaches to any degree of sensualism—it makes this world all, and eclipses every higher good. A fallacy, I say, and is there a more fatal one than that which deludes us to satisfy our souls and employ our faculties with that which must "perish in the using?" Recently, two young princes wished to see the remains of Gustavus Vasa, which lie in the vaults of the cathedral of Upsala. They obtained the consent of the king of Sweden, and the marble sarcophagus was opened. But there was only the great man's skeleton, while the silk and the velvet, and the brocade, were yet fresh. The crown was there and the sceptre, and the golden buckle, while precious stones shed a gleam through the ghastly chamber of the sepulchre.

And, this is the moral of all mere earthly good, even the highest. Its splendor decorates the heart that must soon cease to heave, and its pomp survives and mocks the mortal dust.

My friends, though Herod has slept for ages in his exile-grave! though it is eighteen-hundred years since that John whom he slew attained the martyr's palm, and the Christ whom he insulted ascended to heaven, those incidents are not obsolete. Those forms are not mere shadows flying over the canvas, or reflected from some other sphere of action. We are in the same world with them, and involved with the same realities. And for us also there are two ways of living—Herod's way, the luxury and delight of sensualism, with its disappointments and its end; and John's way, Christ's way—passing through the world, yet living above it; holding sense in subjection and duty in the ascendant; doing the business of life, yet realizing the sanctions of God. There are these two ways of living; and as sure as life itself, your tendencies are in the one or the other of these courses. Which is the true, the blessed, the triumphant way? Judge ye!

# THOMAS:

## THE SKEPTIC.

# III.

## THOMAS: THE SKEPTIC.

. . . Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. JOHN XX. 25.

But little is said in the New Testament respecting Thomas or Didymus. We have no account of his parentage, occupation, or place of birth; though it is supposed that he was a native of Galilee. He was chosen one of the twelve, and appears prominently two or three times in the course of the narrative. His career after the close of Christ's personal ministry, appears to be involved with the uncertainties of tradition. He is mentioned by Origen, Jerome, and other writers, and is said to have bent his steps to the remote East—to India, and even to the borders of China. But the word "*India*" is used vaguely in ancient authors, and may mean Ethiopia. It is said, also, that having visited some of the islands in the Indian ocean, he returned to the shores of the Ganges, and that

after many labors of conversion and of miracle, he was attacked by certain Brahmins, in a secluded place whither he had retired for the purpose of devotion, and shot to death with arrows. These and other traditions are probably more or less true; but no doubt he did his work among the other apostles, and accomplished the mission for which he was chosen, and it is not incredible that, as has been conjectured, the traces of his labors are yet to be seen.

But whatever may have been the personal history of Thomas, his character, by a few artless strokes, stands out distinct and peculiar upon the page of the Evangelist. We see a hesitating and matter-of-fact mind, in remarkable contrast to the confiding spirit of John, and the zeal of Peter. He was evidently possessed of courage, rectitude, and affection. When Jesus declared his intention of visiting Judea, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his disciples, Thomas exclaimed—"Let us also go, that we may die with him." But even in this instance, perhaps, his personal devotion to his master was crossed by doubts respecting his wisdom and his power. At the last Supper we have another evidence of the literal and material quality of his mind. He interprets Christ's reference to the immortal world and to his own death, as an earthly and local allusion; and says—"Lord,

we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" But the most vivid expression of his character appears just after the Resurrection, and in the instance connected with the text. We are told that upon our Savior's first appearance to his disciples, Thomas was absent. And his natural disposition breaks out even in this fact. By him especially Christ's kingdom and reign were anticipated as material and temporal facts. But when he saw One who, as he daily expected, would confound the unbelief of the world by the splendor of some signal manifestation, bound, condemned, crucified, sealed up in the sepulchre, to his conception there was an end of the matter. And so utterly foreign to his cast of mind was the idea of any grander result, that, it is probable, he went about his business. Even the vagueness of hope, and the lingerings of fond expectation, were with him forbidden by the grave. And, therefore, he was not with the disciples when the newly risen Lord so suddenly broke upon them. Therefore, with a sturdy and vehement incredulity, he cried out—"Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Yet the meekness and patience of Jesus condescended to grant even this evidence, and as the apostle's

stubborn doubt was swept away by gushes of wonder and of reverence, he mingles the gentle rebuke—"Be not faithless, but believing."

I have already said, that I do not select these characters in the Gospels as illustrating in every instance characters at the present day. We should not forget that the unbelief of Thomas was only temporary; we should not forget his conversion, and that he retained the place to which his Master called him, and, as we may believe, subsequent faithfulness. Still, from what is exhibited of him in the New Testament, and especially in his position in the text, I think we do him no injustice in taking him as a representative of the general character of the *skeptic*.

And, in entering upon the theme thus indicated, it becomes me to say that I cannot even touch, much less discuss, all the topics which pertain to it. Such a work would of itself require a series of discourses. Nor shall I use the term "*skeptic*" in its strict sense. Philosophical, or absolute skepticism, is very rare. It can only be held by men who have profoundly studied and subtilely analyzed the phenomena of psychology and of being, and therefore is not likely to prevail much among the realities of the every-day world. In this philosophical form, the skeptic denies, or, rather, considers as untrustwor-

thy, every thing—both conclusions and premises, the thing that is perceived and the subject that perceives it. He caricatures metaphysics. He thrives upon the contentions, the sophisms, the defective logic and mutable opinions of other men. He pits warring systems against one another, and sets them to tearing out each other's vitals. He accepts the process of the Idealist who denies the existence of matter, and of the Sensationalist who denies the existence of mind. Between these he pretends to hang balanced. As men do not agree, he concludes there can be no standard of agreement; forgetting that they really do agree in much more than they differ. As one refutes the other, he doubts whether there is any absolute truth, not noticing the common basis upon which both rest their appeals. He points to the dark segments of mystery that interrupt the sphere of knowledge, and so maintains that we know nothing—not making the distinction between incompleteness and delusion. "So," says he, "we can neither believe nor disbelieve, affirm nor deny."

As a play of the intellect, this kind of skepticism may have its place. It may do very well as a satire upon metaphysics. Nay, perhaps it is something more than a satire, and fitly expresses the futility of those inquiries and distinctions which under this name—"metaphy-

sics"—have occupied so many minds from Aristotle until now. But, whatever may be its position, it is refuted by simple common sense. The skeptic himself refutes it in the very process by which he endeavors to justify it. He reasons while shaking the whole fabric of reason. He eats, though he cannot prove that bread which nourished him yesterday will nourish him to-day. He commits himself to slumber, though it is impossible to demonstrate that the bed is more substantial than his dreams.

This kind of skepticism, moreover, is not necessarily connected with disbelief in religion. Hume, it is true, was a philosophical skeptic, but so was Pascal. Indeed, this ground has sometimes been resorted to as a fortress for Religion. Men have labored to unsettle all the *natural* foundations of knowledge in order to exalt the value of a *supernatural* Revelation.

But I refer particularly, at this time, to what commonly passes under the name of skepticism, though it might, perhaps more justly, be termed unbelief. It is, at least, a position of doubt as to spiritual and religious truths—as to Revelation, and the higher propositions of natural theology. And I would say, in the first place, that there is such a thing as an honest skepticism. There may be an inborn proclivity, a defect in reasoning, or really a lack of proper evidence.

Yet, in such a case, we must suppose an earnest desire to know the truth, and a stedfast endeavor to find it. Let me say, moreover, that, to a certain degree, skepticism is a duty. The prerogative of reason obligates me to deliberate between propositions. One of the grandest faculties we possess, is the power of extricating truth, and he who evinces an open-mouthed credulity, is not only weak but false—false to the highest endowments and privileges of his manhood. In proportion to the magnitude of a subject, also, there is wisdom in avoiding precipitate conclusions—in turning a matter around and letting the light stream full upon every angle of it. Perhaps it is well too, as a general thing, for a man to keep aloof from systems. It is a great evil in the world, that as soon as we receive truth, we are prone to let it crystallize. We must frame it into a creed, and measure it with a ritual. Our minds get imbedded in it, so as to close up the avenues of fresh communication and render it difficult to shift our position to higher and broader ground. Let us not be too ready to separate our truth from the fluent mass that perpetually undulates towards us. Let us not petrify our fragment and make it the nucleus of a party. Let us not settle down upon it, and hedge it in, as though it were the whole. The revelation of God, and of the universe, is

not yet sealed. More is to break forth from Christianity than is now comprehended in any sect. And every man should be so much of a skeptic as always to stand in an attitude of inquiry and reception. Nay, there are instances when skepticism betrays more genuine religious life than a formal profession. The man who strives to reach the core of things, who anxiously wrestles with doubt and clasps his temporary conviction though it makes his very heart bleed, and yet who beats about in blinding mist and cannot see, may be nearer the kingdom of heaven than he who mechanically wears the yoke of tradition, who worships in listless conformity, but who cares nothing for the truth in itself and in whose soul that truth lies dead.

But all this is very different from the kind of skepticism to which I refer, and which appears in various phases. Sometimes, it exists as a cavilling spirit, and contents itself with proposing objections and springing sharp dilemmas. Sometimes it is covered by a hollow-hearted orthodoxy. Sometimes it is merely the instrument of youth and recklessness at a period when there is a craving after novelty and notoriety, and a chivalric delight in assaulting opinions that the majority hold sacred. There is a class of men, too, who are fond of singularity. They are teased and wearied by popular enthusiasm upon

any subject, and if the mass should turn skeptics they would be quite likely to come out stanch believers. There are also moral grounds of skepticism—a pride of intellect, a dislike of religious restraint and discipline. But, in any instance, I allude to skepticism when held not as a wise precaution or a transition-state of the mind, but as a theory in which passion and interest are enlisted—which is to be defended whatever may offer—and which is not so much true skepticism as systematic and desperate unbelief.

And, in this light, I would remark especially upon the *unfairness* of the skeptic. This may be illustrated by the objections which he commonly urges against the New Testament. Now even if its claims to special inspiration be disposed of, still the Gospel remains professedly a Record of actual events, and as such it is entitled to the treatment which is applied to any other history. But no book has been so disingenuously handled—so stretched and racked by criticism. It has undergone a microscopic scrutiny. It has been dissected word by word. And every apparent discrepancy has been paraded as a triumphant refutation of its authenticity. Thus, it is found that Matthew describes the healing of a leper as having taken place *before*

Christ entered Capernaum, while Mark and Luke represent it as occurring *after* he left that city. One Evangelist mentions *one* Gadarene demoniac, and another *two*. One says that the women came to the sepulchre while it was yet *dark;* another, that they came at *dawn*, and yet another says at *sunrise*. But even if these statements could not be reconciled, does it follow that the events to which they relate did not take place? Is this a fair rule? One which would be legitimate in its application to any other circumstances? Do we acknowledge it as such in the transactions of every-day life? On the contrary, it is felt that diversity of evidence as to the *incidentals* of a fact, so far from proving the fact untrue, increases its probability. Smooth, rounded stories, each tallying with the other in every particular, present an aspect of fabrication. To the lookers-on, any transaction always shews different phases, and their variation upon different points only proves their independence. In this respect, therefore, the narratives in the Gospels wear the freshness of reality. Applying a fair test, we should say, that the evidence of one man, to the effect that a certain event took place at one hour, and the testimony of another to the effect that it took place at a later period, is surely no proof that the essential fact involved in both affirmations did

not take place at all. On the contrary, it is strong demonstration that the fact did occur. Therefore, I repeat, it is unfair, for the skeptic to deny the same test in the case of the healing of the leper, or of the Resurrection, which he allows in other transactions. I do not say that he should not require *stronger* evidence in the case of a miracle, but that he should not repudiate it because of that *diversity* of testimony, which in any other instance would be accepted as an additional proof. Let him stretch any other history upon the same rack, and apply to it the same requisitions, and there is scarcely a fact of ancient or modern times which would not be resolved into a fiction or a myth. Take, for example, the account given by different writers of the length of Alexander the Great's reign. One says he reigned twelve years, another thirteen, another thirty-five. Now, if we adopt the skeptic's method of dealing with the New Testament, we must conclude that the illustrious Macedonian never reigned at all. One author says that John Milton was born in 1606, one in 1608, and one in 1609. Was there no such person, then, as John Milton? One historian says, that, at the battle of Bunker's hill, "the British moved to the attack with rattling drums, and incessant discharges of muskets and great guns!" but another says—"they came stealing

on, as silent as the grave." Moreover, what historians usually call "the battle of Bunker's Hill," did not take place on Bunker's, but on Breed's Hill.* Was there no such battle, then? Does that tall granite monument perpetuate a mere legend? Was it reared upon romance? It is no more palpable than that solid monument of christianity which stands before us to-day.

Now, in any other circumstances, such objections would be regarded as quibbles; and yet the skeptic urges them as valid arguments against the New Testament. I style such a method *unfair*, therefore, and indicative not of open inquiry but of obstinate theory. The Bible is not to be judged in all respects like a history composed, since history became a science; but take that old volume, which has survived the decay of ages and the shocks of revolution, whose every book is an epoch, whose every leaf almost turns over a century, and whose simple narratives open to us the experience and link us to the sympathies of our common nature four thousand years ago; take it, and apply to its records the same tests you apply to Polybius or Livy, and the skeptic, if his skepticism is honest, will find less room for his cavils and his sneers.

In the second place, I object to the *dogmatism*

* See Thayer on Infidelity.

of the skeptic. Sifting his assertions, in many instances they amount essentially to this—that he will believe in nothing wonderful—nothing that transcends his philosophy. His course with the miracles is a fair illustration of this. He will not believe them because they are outside his experience, and, as he says, "a violation of the laws of nature." Now this position is altogether dogmatic and unwarranted. In the first place, the skeptic makes his experience the test of all possibility; and, in the next place, he virtually assumes that he is acquainted with all the laws of nature. Yet, while it is true that a miracle demands greater evidence than an ordinary occurrence, the united experience of the race cannot demonstrate the impossibility of such a thing. Singularly enough, Hume, who presses this argument of experience against miracles as an unbroken testimony in the past, subtilely urges the fact that we cannot make that experience valid for a single conclusion in the future. We can give no reason, he says, why because bread has nourished us to-day, it should do so to-morrow. But if it is possible that this chain of experience *may* be interrupted, is it not possible that it *has* been? It is simply a question of evidence, and yet, while he is forced to admit this, the secret ground of the skeptic is, that no amount of evidence would induce him

to believe a miracle. But is it not the grossest assumption for any man to look abroad through the universe, and say that nothing can take place except according to the usual order? If he believes in a God, will he maintain that the Creator cannot touch the springs of His own mechanism? Or will he say that the Infinite One Himself is bound to just that method which science has observed? Can he say that a miracle is a violation of those laws? It may supersede any known law—but does he know every law? Who shall say that the laws of nature *were* violated, when the sick were healed at a word, or the blind by a touch? This may have been merely the suppression of the common process, and the inlet of a higher method.

But what, after all, do we mean by "*laws* of nature?" We mean nothing more than the way in which God usually works in the material world—we mean merely the observed methods of His Will in physical things. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a law of nature. No actual entities standing between God and His manifestations in the physical universe. He fills that universe. He touches it at every point. Its life is but the pulsation of His Omnipresence; its phenomena are only the attitudes of His thought. Shall we say, then, that He can never shift His method—that the Master

can touch but one string of His instrument? Can He not, at will, run His swift hand across the chords, making the cause and the sequence one? Can He not speak, and it shall be done—command and it shall stand fast? In such a case, the law of nature is not violated but varied by Him who is Himself that Law. Moreover, we are profoundly ignorant of *processes*. In the last analysis, we can give no reason why medicine should cure a fever any more than a word—why the blind eye should obey the science of the oculist any more than the touch of a finger. The only answer that can be given in any instance is—"It is God's will;" and no man who believes in a God at all will deem this answer irrelevant. Nor will any one who considers the limitations of human knowledge, who realizes the wonder in which he is embosomed, and the unseen forces of the universe, deny the possibility of a miracle simply upon the ground of his experience or his philosophy of nature. And yet this dogmatical ground is the radical support of skepticism in this respect. Let it be given up, and the miracles of the New Testament would stand, where every enlightened Christian would have them stand—upon their specific credibility. But now, no amount of internal or external evidence can shake the obstinate incredulity which will not believe because

it has never seen, or because such belief requires faith in something broader than it knows.

In fact, the sources of this skepticism are fed by a sentiment quite common in human nature, which opposes the admission of any thing surpassing its routine of thought and knowledge. In every-day life, there is a class of men who, upon the broaching of any strange fact or theory, shrug their shoulders and toss out an expression of incredulity or contempt. That this does not always indicate shrewdness and intelligence, but sometimes narrowness and ignorance, I need not say. While the enlightened mind jumps to no hasty conclusions, applies sound and candid tests, and holds its decision in abeyance to reason, it knows too well, the truth of the poet's assertion, that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy," to assume at once a dogmatic unbelief. There are men in the world to whose vision, if we judge by their assumptions, the universe lies compact and open; for they repudiate every transcendent suggestion, and act as if they expected to learn nothing more. Sailing upon this little ball of earth through an infi nite ocean of mystery, shut in by a thin film from countless suns of being—one would think that the invisible forces of nature, the secrets of the under-world, and the treasures of the far-

reaching firmament, were all published in the news papers, or packed and labelled along the streets through which they walk, and in the rooms where they eat and sleep. Until mankind at large are startled out of this vulgar assumption and materialism, we offer too much verge for the skeptic who, like Thomas, will not believe unless he can see, and touch, and handle, and who is so strongly rooted in his prepossessions that, it is probable, he would find some excuse for maintaining them even though one should rise from the dead.

But, again; the skeptic, as I think, errs in the exclusive authority which he ascribes to the *intellect.* He will believe in nothing that cannot be logically demonstrated. But while it may be true that as to all our conclusions we must have the correspondence, or ratification of reason, we should live but meagerly indeed, if we cherished and did nothing but what the intellect can distinctly grasp. Mystery is involved with our most familiar acts, and our confidence, in a thousand instances, reaches far beyond the direct lines of reason. We have faculties for apprehending knowledge other than those which deal with physical and mathematical realities. The intercourse of hearth and home, the relations of child and mother, and brother and friend, are not deductions of logic. Let any father under-

take to prove by logical concatenation that he loves his son. Let us endeavor to probe the human heart with sharp, scientific analysis, and to define its sympathies. These things cannot be expressed in propositions. They elude our grasp. They refuse to be guaged by our measure. And yet, the human heart *knows* that it loves; we trust to the sanctities of home; the child rests in its mother's arms as confidently as the philosopher rests upon the laws of the universe. Moreover, we deal constantly with inexplicable realities. In every step we take, in every transaction, reason is mingled with faith; and even as to this busy, work-day world, the sphere of the latter is as ample, and as much confided in as the sphere of sight. The conclusions of faith and of the affections, then, are considered as legitimate as the conclusions of logic. The skeptic accepts them as such, every hour he lives, so far as earthly things are concerned. But the moment he comes in contact with spiritual statements, he demands that every thing shall be strained through the menstruum of his brain, or be seen in clear outline upon the horizon. He does not believe in a God, because intellectually he cannot conceive His Infinity. He does not believe in immortality, because he has never seen one rise from the dead. Faith and intuition are good evidences upon ordinary

points, but when religion presents its supersensual realities, his arrogant reason exclaims—"Except I can see, and touch, and intensify under my own lens, I will not believe." What I claim from the skeptic is, the exercise of his *whole nature* upon the matters of Religion; not in order that he may believe things contrary to his understanding, but things too deep for its measurement, too lofty for its reach—things which his understanding, acting in harmony with all his powers, acknowledges when presented, but which of itself it cannot demonstrate. But now in the isolation of his clear, cold intellect, the skeptic abides in a glacial and spectral universe. No glow from the affections lights up the frost and shadow of the grave. He feels no prophecy in the thrill of the human heart, in the incompleteness of nature. He believes merely in things tangible, and sees only in the day-time. He will not confess the authenticity of that paler light of faith which was meant to shine when the sunshine of reason falls short, and the firmament of mystery is over our heads.

And yet there is a close alliance between skepticism and *superstition*. For, if the skeptic is not certain that supersensual realities do exist, neither does he know that they do not exist. And often you will see the man who contemns the bible, and rejects the notion of immortality,

summoning a weird horror from the great abyss of the unknown, dealing in magic, trusting in charms, and expecting communications from departed spirits. For, man is so constituted that he must believe in something supersensual. He knows that the limited experience of mortality cannot be all; that the universe is prolific; that regions of being must lie all about him, far beyond the scope of his earthly vision. And, rejecting that steady light which streams upon us from Revelation, he builds up some abnormal and fantastic creed. In fact, the enlightened Christian is the true philosopher. If we would be free from the perplexities of superstition, and from the fanaticism of credulity, if we would tread upon the solid earth and carry a calm and steady intellect, we must accept those statements which come to us upon the authority of Jesus. Otherwise, we are at the mercy of every new suggestion. We know not where we are, nor whither we are drifting. We know not whether we are in the hands of God, or of demons. To-day, we believe that we shall die as brutes—to-morrow, that our souls will transmigrate. We know not what spectre from the mysterious deep will start out upon us. And a worse result than this pertains to the skeptical mood. It unsettles the grounds of all moral action. In some fit of melancholy, in the bitter-

ness of disappointment, or upon some extraordinary revelation of human selfishness, it moves us to deny that there is any such thing as virtue, and makes the difference between it and vice to be merely one of convenience. Now, it publishes the code of self-indulgence and laps us in a voluptuous Epicureanism; and anon, it holds up the rigid and impossible ideal of the stoic, or ascetic. And it will be seen, after all, that Christianity furnishes the only foundation of a harmonious and rational life. While it pours upon this world the light of another, it also burns away those ghastly and distorting mists which evolve from the depths of unguided speculation, and is as unfavorable to superstition, as it is to atheism. It urges a code of duty, strict yet simple; fitted to beings of earthly mould, yet of immortal destiny.

Doubtless, were we to probe the grounds of skepticism, we might find there *dislike to religion*—to its duties and sacrifices—as a potent cause of unbelief. But, leaving this as a bare suggestion, I will make one or two isolated criticisms, and close.

I remark, then, that, often, skepticism appears as a system of dialectic convenience. The skeptic does not profess any belief, and so easily shifts his ground. When hard pressed upon one point, he nimbly jumps to another, and when cramped

between both, he maintains that he neither denies nor affirms. Now, I have already spoken against precipitate conclusions. I have urged the claim of reason over credulity. I have commended a due weighing and sifting of evidence. But, surely the man who in this world sticks to nothing, may be suspected of hollow-heartedness. He appears as one who amuses himself with the universe, instead of working out its problems. He is a skilful fencer, and not a true warrior in the battle of life; and causes us to feel that the downright fanatic is nearer to the heart of things, than the cool and slippery disputant.

And, again, it is to be objected to skepticism, that it has never accomplished any thing. It has never founded empires, established principles, or changed the world's heart. The great *doers* in history have always been men of *faith*.

At least, we may say of skepticism, that it only *tears down*. The skeptic topples into ruins the fabric which has sheltered me, and where I have found peace, and turns me out into the region of doubt and of bleak necessity. As Carlyle says of Voltaire, he has "a torch for burning, but no hammer for building." But this was never meant to be so. It is not in analogy with the universe, in which destruction is but the transition to higher development. Man is a

being of affections and desires, but the skeptic plucks from him all upon which these affections rest, or that satisfies his desire, and leaves him empty-handed to contend with the problems of existence. And all this because our knowledge is incomplete—because the objects of our trust are not entirely in sight. I would say, though I cannot see the whole, leave me the portions that I do see. Let me stand upon them, islands as they are in the mist-wrapped ocean of being. I gain nothing by leaping from them, blindly, into the deep. Nay, would not many say, even if christianity is a delusion, leave us that delusion? It is better than the emptiness of skepticism. Though I may be doomed to annihilation, I shall at least never know that I have been mocked. If the grave be all, let me *think* that I see beyond it. Though God in reality be far from me, let me trust that I can commune with Him. Though your clear intellect discerns no supersensual good, let me still harbor among the suggestions of affection and of faith. Let me still be one of that great company—that long procession of those who have marched to the land of shadows, who for thousands of years have prayed and hoped, and who in all have found Religion to be an uplifting influence and a healing balm. Let me be among those trusting fathers, those loving mothers, those confiding children, who have en-

dured the trials, and shared the joys of earth, mixing all with their belief in better realities, and who in dying-chambers have laid them calmly down, with their religion

"Not dreaming that it was a dream."

Nay, let me accord with the lofty natures that have soared and sung, and yet in their noblest discoveries, in their richest floods of inspiration, have found nothing to shake their tenderest trust. Let me live in the faith of apostles; let me fall asleep in the confidence of martyrs. Let me be with these, O! skeptic in their delusion, rather than with you in your refutation and denial. Let me be with these until you can give me something better.

But, my friends, to most of us, I presume, Christianity is not a delusion. Though we have not seen we believe. Though we have not touched the bodily form of Jesus, nor thrust our hands into his wounded side, yet we have faith in his actual existence and living spirit. We acknowledge a God. We give our assent to the great claims and sanctions of duty. We believe that though this body shall drop to ashes, the soul shall go beaming upward like a star. But of what use is this belief without corresponding action? What better is a formal Christianity than an avowed rejection of it? Surely far

better is that intellectual skepticism which, like Thomas, will honestly follow its convictions, than that moral skepticism which, while we cry out with our lips—"My Lord and my God!" leaves us still indolent and faithless.

# PILATE:

## THE MAN OF THE WORLD.

# IV.

## PILATE: THE MAN OF THE WORLD.

And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. MARK xv. 15.

ALTHOUGH I have devoted each of these discourses to the consideration of a particular phase of character, I am compelled to indicate that peculiarity by the most comprehensive term. Under every general class, there are varieties, each of which might form a separate topic. This is especially the case with the subject which I have selected for this evening. For the term, "Man of the World," may be applied to men whose conduct and whose station in life are very different. But, although it includes a multitude of *species*, there are one or two traits showing that it designates a common *genus*. These traits may be detected in that personage to whom I now call your attention.

Pontius Pilate was appointed Procurator, or Governor of Judea, by the Emperor Tiberias,

and held that office for about ten years. But few details respecting him appear in history. In the course of his administration he is represented as performing several acts of cruelty and insult. Thus, he shocked the religious feelings of the Jews by bringing into the streets of Jerusalem the Roman standards, decorated with the effigy of the Emperor. By that people, such images were considered idolatrous, and, accordingly, Pilate's predecessors had always entered the city without them. It was only after a great excitement, in this instance, that the obnoxious emblems were withdrawn. He touched the same feeling again by taking some of the sacred money from the treasury of the temple for the purpose of building a magnificent aqueduct. The populace rose and prevented the work. Pilate, having disguised some of his soldiers, sent them in among the multitude, and upon a signal they drew their concealed weapons, and slew great numbers of the unarmed and surprised rioters. Another tumult which broke out in Samaria, and which was attended with like consequences, was the occasion of his own downfall. For this bloody act, he was accused by the Samaritan Senate of murder, and by order of Vitellius, President of Syria, he was sent to Rome to answer to this charge. It is stated that he was banished by the Emperor

Caligula into Gaul, and that there he put an end to his own life.

In the New Testament, Pilate is mentioned as ordering the massacre of certain Galileans, which may have been one of the instances already referred to. But he appears principally in connection with the crucifixion of our Savior; and it is there that he unfolds those traits of character upon which I have founded the present discourse.

Although perplexed by the manner of Jesus, and knowing nothing of his real claims, it required but little penetration for him to discover that the prisoner was unjustly accused by the Jews, and to detect the hollowness of their sudden profession of loyalty. He was disposed, therefore, to rescue him from the fury of his enemies. For this purpose he tried several expedients. At one time he refused to proceed with the case, as there was no evidence against the Savior. Then, he endeavored to compromise the matter, by scourging Jesus. Availing himself of a custom, he proposed to set the accused at liberty instead of Barabbas, a convicted robber. He tried to throw off the responsibility by sending Christ to Herod. He made an appeal to the humanity of the people, by leading him forth crowned with thorns and bleeding. But it only inflamed their passions, and they responded

with the brutal shout—"Crucify him!" All was in vain. The multitude, instigated by their leaders, grew more excited, and, at length, lifted the ominous cry—"If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend!" This effected their object more than anything else; it seemed to touch a chord in Pilate's breast. So, washing his hands, as though that ceremony could cleanse his *soul* from guilt, he delivered up the Redeemer to the mockery of the soldiers, and the will of the Jews.

Though we have seen instances of cruelty on the part of Pilate, and he has been styled a venal judge, and a bloody ruler, such are not the most prominent traits exhibited by him here. Nor can we deny that he made several attempts to release Jesus. The Savior himself appears to have accounted him less guilty than his own countrymen. But, admitting all this, it is clear, throughout the whole transaction, that Pilate recognised nothing higher than conventional law; nothing higher than policy and self-interest. Upon ordinary occasions, he was firm enough. He did not fear the clamors of the people, nor parley with their humor. He could have saved Jesus if he would. But with the same recklessness with which he shed the blood of the guilty who revolted against the state, he permitted the blood of the Innocent to be shed in

order to preserve the peace of the state. He was willing that Christ should be spared, but was more willing to maintain his own ease, and was very glad to send the man against whom he could find nothing, to Herod. And when the clamors of the people threatened not merely his ease, but his power and his life—when he thought of that angry excitement surging against the palace at Rome, and waking the jealousy of the dreadful Tiberius, he decided the matter at once. Innocent as the Savior was, he could not afford to lose his own place. It was better that policy should stand, and the guiltless perish than otherwise—and so he gave him up. Singularly enough, it was by an accusation of the Jewish people that Pilate *did* fall at last. But had he fallen *now*, it would have been for an act of tenderness. *Then* it was for an act of cruelty. Now he would have carried into his exile the thought of mercy and of justice, to bear him up. Then he carried hands red with the blood of his subjects, and, among other memories, the recollection of the guiltless and condemned Nazarine—sacrificed to preserve that very policy which, with himself, had fallen into ruin.

Pilate, then, acted according to a conventional standard. He was a man of *secondary* principles—a man of self-interest and policy;

and, therefore, he fairly represents *the man of the world.*

It is proper to say here, however, that this term—*man of the world*—may be employed in a highly commendable sense, which in order to distinguish it from the class represented by Pilate, I propose, in the first place, to define. We may call one a man of the world, then, who thoroughly knows the world, and because he thus knows it, is able to use and to withstand it. He is neither a slave to it, nor in partnership with it, but holds it in its proper place. And yet, his dominion over it, gives him a wise *adaptedness* to it. He does not show his superiority by being uncouth, or unsophisticated. Though the whole of it may appear to him but as a grain of sand in the infinitude of God, he is aware of its absolute value, for he has weighed it, and tested it. He is a man of shrewd observation and of large intercourse. He knows how to say the right word, to touch the pertinent point, and is not to be imposed upon by anything in this ingenious and productive Babel. He does not neglect his sphere of life, but carries into it honor, and dignity, and power. Withal, he is a gentleman; exhibiting that gentility in which the heart and the manners are flexibly interwo ven, which lends to the earnestness of true manhood a reconciling amenity, and which, while it

costs so little, gives so much. In one word, he is a contrast to the bigot, the simpleton, and the boor.

And not only does he manifest a wise adaptedness to the world, but a large *sympathy* with it. He is superior to a narrow sectionality. Affection for particular men and places he has, but this does not circumscribe his charity. It is very easy to dignify local prejudice with the name of patriotism, and, in our day, the mistake seems not uncommon. A man's love for his native land lies deeper than any logical expression, among those pulses of the heart which vibrate to the sanctities of home, and to the thoughts which leap up from his fathers' graves. His admiration of his country may blend the unselfish emotions of reverence and gratitude. But, when this puffs out in an extravagant boastfulness, or contracts into an exclusive affection, it is simply ignorance or demagogism. And, certainly, our true man of the world entertains none of this "anti-magnanimous egotism." He looks over the earth, so scanning its different portions, as to perceive more clearly the defects as well as the excellences of his own—the good as well as the evil of others. In the noble language of Lord Bacon, his "heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them."

But, after all, the source of this superiority to the world lies in an internal and reserved power —the power of Moral Principle and Religious Faith, which, at once enable him to avoid the contaminations of the world, and yet to mingle with it—to overcome its temptations and to send abroad a blessed and transfiguring influence, and which cause the most incidental expressions of his nature to reflect the goodness and wisdom with which they have been associated—like a transparent stream that rolls over floors of opal and of gold. His is the spirit of duty and of tolerance, so that he is neither ductile nor obstinate. He does not jump with the popular humor at the risk of dislocating his own conscience; nor does he withhold any reasonable advances in order that he may indulge the luxury of self-will. He is not an oak nor a reed, but assimilates to himself, the sunshine, the wind, and all the diversities of circumstance, that he may ripen, and fulfil his being, like the growing corn. And thus ripening and fulfilling, he feels the increase of years, to use the expression of Sir Thomas Overbury, not by "weakness of body, but by strength of soul." His is no fungus-life, clinging below the ordinary surface of existence and sucking the dank air of passion. It is no sterile formula covered with thin herbage and eked out with flaunting weeds. It

is a rooted power, striking far down among ripe experiences and fibres of strenuous discipline.

Moreover, to such a man the world is transparent, and all things lie enfolded in their absolute relations. What others are apt to regard as more solid he treats as unsubstantial; and what they deem visionary he finds most real. Banks and warehouses, cathedrals and pyramids, are but cutaneous temporalities; and "the perpetual hills" but bubbles shot from the seething deeps. These dense materialities enclose spiritual facts, as the clouds sheathe lightning; the concave lies about him like a thin dome of crystal; and he believes that, could we only couch the film of sense that covers our perception, we should find ourselves embosomed in awful mountain-clefts of being, in which the flashing lights, the continual wheels, the sounding stream of the market and the street, would dissolve and roll away like clouds of vapor. And yet, perceiving all these forms to be thus charged and mixed with spiritual realities, he is absorbed in no fantastical fancies. His very faith in the *truly* spiritual guards him from the grotesque, and he accepts his lot in this lower sphere as a work to be *guided* but not *interrupted* by intimations from a higher. Perceiving an exhaustless revelation in every globe of dew, and every star, he rejoices that One clearer

Light has beamed upon the path of duty, and cleft the shadow of the grave, and deems it best, as it has been ordered—that we should labor with shaded eyes here in our mortal field, around which hangs a nebulous fringe of suggestion; around which broods a wise and merciful silence.

To sum up; we may say for such an one, that the essential good of the world has passed into his being in orderly subjection and legitimate uses, and so he is greater than it. He lays hold of its embryotic possibilities, and fills them with spiritual purpose. Its appetites are reined back within the orbits of reason and conscience. Its forms of knowledge stand reflected in the round mirror of his thought. Against its antagonisms his moral principle struggles, and gains force by struggling; like the pine that pushes up between wedges of granite and stands out against the arctic sky. While, in the compass of his Faith, it all dwindles to an atom, and he is bound about with the Omnipresence of God. He is a man of the world, then, as *master* of the world. The circumstances of his existence here, are not the impediments of his life; are not the staple of his life; but its adjuncts. They drop around him like the sculptured drapery around a statue, from which rises his essential character erect and clear.

Of a very different stamp from all this, however, is the man of the world in the common acceptation of the term; which implies not that he has a wise knowledge of the world, a pure sympathy with it, and a noble mastery over it; but, simply, that he is *level* with it—lives from its motives, and in accordance with its standards. He who belongs to this class differs from the *sensualist*, because, though he may give unlawful scope to the appetites, sensualism is an ingredient of his character rather than the staple; while, often, he controls desire, and keeps passion in check, as vigorously as a stoic. The sensualist is chaotic and reckless, and *wallows* in indulgence. But this man holds the reins in his hand, and never suffers gratification to overcome himself, or to defeat an ulterior purpose. His life is organized, and has a plan and a code. He has less heat than the other, but greater steadiness, and his character is altogether more compact and definite. Whatever may be his sphere, he keeps even with the current, and adjusts himself to its standards. I repeat, he is level with the world. He sinks to no grossness which is below its proprieties; he rises to no enthusiasm which overleaps its policy.

As this class comprehends a multitude, the varieties are numerous. In selecting two or three illustrations of the general type, we may

notice him who is level with the mere *elegancies* of the world. According to the stamina of his nature, this one will be a splendid trifler or a twittering fop. In the first instance, it is easy to be perceived that the luxurious idler is intrinsically capable of better things. He has been well endowed, and possesses the fibres of a noble manhood. But the great deep within him has not been broken up; its chords have not been toned to the higher solemnities of being; and he has only glided upon the ecliptic of fashionable routine. A true man always preserves his simplicity of soul, and no contact frets away the springs of delight and enthusiasm. The great statesman, furrowed as he is with many cares, and used to the angularities of diplomacy; or the philosopher who toils in abstract mazes; finds music, poetry, the outward universe, as fresh and glorious to-day as in the star-eyed morning of youth, and the magic touch of sympathy makes him laugh or cry like a boy. But our man of the world, who has done nothing but fritter away time, *because* his mind has been occupied with no great thought or duty, cannot feel this joy of resiliency—this rebound from labor to refreshment, from artificial constraint to the natural sympathies. He has lived upon the blooms and flavors of life until relish is lost in surfeit. He has exhausted the super-

ficialities of nature and of art, and as he has not exercised his being into a profounder insight, all has become monotonous and tasteless. He cannot tease satiety into zest. He abhors emotion, and subsides into disgust. With the plane of his vision still level to the garnish of life, he finds his only excitement in criticising it. And when this is performed soberly, it is well for the critic and well for the world. But it must be done by him who can take in its relations with a telescopic sweep, as well as see its defects through an opera-glass. Thus, in the collapse of a worn-out body and a jaded soul, he sinks—this polished man of fashion and of the town, this fastidious and heartless worldling—he sinks, like a plummet, into the depths of the infinite, upon whose mere surface and with whose most transient phenomena he has trifled away his being.

Of the representative of this variety in its weaker aspect, I need only say that he is a slick and harmless being; a kind of whiskered Essence, or organized Perfume; level to the minutest propriety of the drawing-room and the opera, his thoughts oppressed with ten thousand points of ceremony, or pondering grave problems as to the color of a glove or the shape of a boot.

These remarks are not in disparagement of true elegance and refinement; but I describe

those who live only in hollow, glittering forms. I speak of those who draw around them the upholstery of an artificial world, a world of frippery and gas-light, and thus shut out the true world of thought and life; shut out the true world of nature, where flowers bloom, and sunbeams fall, and over which Orion sparkles, and the Pleiades lead their flashing train. I speak of those who see only a border-surface of the world, as they float through life downward towards the dark and rapid river, and vanish at last, like bubbles, at the gates of the grave.

Again; there is the man who is level with the *honors* and *advantages* of the world. To a degree, he may be what commonly passes for a moral man. He *is* moral, so far as morality is not troublesome. He values diligence, prudence, punctuality, for these are good business-qualities. He sets a high estimate upon respectability, and would not willingly violate the proprieties of his class. He cherishes a sense of honor. He is not without kind feelings, and generous impulses. He pays a decent regard to the externals of religion. In short, he is as good as circumstances will admit. And by "circumstances," he means his own interest; for, in the world of which he is chiefly cognizant, circumstances are not so much the fluctuations of matter and spirit, as of stocks and staples;

and just where interest and morality part company *his* morality gives out. He entertains no conception of self-sacrifice, no unworldly enthusiasm. He never rises into the transcendant region of duty. His conscience is not a dynamic force. It experiences no upheavals, no revolutions, no throbs of fathomless suggestion. It never intrudes upon him. It is as compact and monotonous as a clock; though he never thinks of winding it up, or of examining whether it has not run down. He weighs everything in the scales of profit and loss, and measures propositions with an eye as cold and hard as a bullet. As to martyrdom for truth and justice, he considers it a fine fact in history; but he would as soon expect to see a ghost in Wall-street, as a man actually putting by tangible advantages for these high principles. Only one thing he clearly discerns—that "it will not *pay*."

Take, for illustration, this variety of the man of the world as a *politician*, or *statesman*. We shall discover throughout his entire course, the service of self at all cost, and the sacrifice of abstractions to tangible realities. We shall behold a man flexible, quick, sagacious, eloquent; well versed in the knowledge of human nature as the very grammar of his profession, and familiar with all that touches the popular pulse; knowing when silence or ambiguity will serve

his purpose, and when honesty and boldness. Or, if he mounts above merely selfish considerations, he rises no higher than the interests of the party, or their immediate and material good. He deprecates all agitation that disturbs these, and does not forecast the final income of truth —the operation of that great law by which, in the long run, it turns out to be the best policy, both for individuals and for states. In trying times, he will hardly stand up and say—"Let party cement dissolve—let even material interests be scattered for the time—the Right and that alone will I maintain!" Or, if he takes the Right for a buttress, as a final support for his position, he must make a hinge of compromises. Pilate did not like to crucify Jesus, but he scourged him.

Sufficiently distinguished from either of these varieties is the man whom we may call "the *Worldly Philosopher.*" He is distinguished from these because he acts upon his principles *deliberately.* For all who may be ranked under this denomination are not distinctly conscious of their position. A man's failure to observe the highest standard of living is not always the effect of wilful disregard; but depends much upon the moral plane in which he moves. In other words, he does not plumply violate conscience, but acts with an *uneducated* conscience.

His moral retina is not sensitive, nor is its discrimination quick and clear. What he does see he sees well enough, but the light within him is feeble. The difficulty is not with his logical deductions, but with his premises, which will change only with a change in his position. Thus two men with the same degree of intellectual intelligence, and the same data before them, come to very different conclusions, because they do not stand on the same moral level. With one, the standard of rectitude is at zero, with the other it is far above or below zero. I am not attempting an ethical analysis; but thus may be explained, though not excused, the conduct of many, without supposing that they logically reason out the wrong, and deliberately reject it. Now the difference between the worldly philosopher and the majority of those who live level with the world, appears in the fact that with him this *is* a deliberate standard. His philosophy, as well as their conduct, may spring from lack of moral comprehensiveness; but while they do not distinctly see their practical land-marks, he does. He has looked about him, pondered matters shrewdly, and arrived at the conclusion—that the best thing for a man to do in the world is to take care of himself—is to grasp the good that comes in his way, without any fine-spun sentiment. His ideas of things

are mean and sarcastic. He has no faith in human disinterestedness. To his view, society is a nest of eels, each trying to get his head above the other, and he who succeeds best *is* the best. Patriotism, virtue, religion, he considers to be all shams. Every man has his price; the statesman in the senate-chamber, the philosopher in his closet, and the preacher in his pulpit. There is no such thing as ingrained loyalty to conscience. Tickle a man's ruling passion sufficiently, tempt him with the bait of office, jingle a heavy purse before him, and he will cast off his virtue as a snake sheds its skin. Love is but passion, devotion is superstition or cant, and no trust can be reposed in a bosom-friend or in the sanctities of home. And our philosopher considers himself a part of the world which he thus caricatures. If it is running down the inclined-plane of depravity, he means to ride, and enjoy it, and laugh at it. He has no idea of thrusting his arm into the spokes, or of sacrificing himself to block the wheels. He does not believe in saints, and he does not mean to be a hypocrite—unless you bribe him to it. This is the philosophy of the *libertine*, who coolly denies the sanctions which he affronts, and endeavors to erect inclination into law. It is the philosophy of the *sharper*, with whom trade is a series of practical jokes, and who allows no cri-

terion but success. It is the philosophy of the *hireling*, ready to serve any faction, and to convert his pen into a dagger or a muck-rake. It is the philosophy of men who have been soured by disappointment, or made desperate by the chafing of circumstances against their pride—of men in whom the affections are overflowed by a sardonic temper or a mercurial wit—of men who, convinced in themselves of intense selfishness or spontaneous cunning, have made their own breasts the concave-glass in which they see the whole world. It is the philosophy of disease, or deformity, transmuting idiosyncrasy into history. It is not necessary to urge any argument against it. A Mephistopheles might welcome such a theory, but it is refuted by the simple instincts of our nature, which revolt from *any* form of universal skepticism. The world is bad enough, but we see the depravity by light which streams from veins of goodness running through it; and around its lazar-houses and shambles, its giant selfishness and pointed deceits, there are martyr graves and patriot battle-fields, Love burning forever like a vestal fire, and Faith looking calmly upward.

Such, then, variously modified in individual cases, are some of the general characteristics of that class who may be called men of the world, as being level with the world. In Pilate, this

secondary conception and time-serving policy appear in his ignorance of the true dignity of Jesus, and in his readiness to sacrifice innocence to interest. When, half in vague wonder, perhaps half in contempt, he asked—"Art thou a king, then?" how poorly did he understand that sublime answer—"Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." What did the Roman Governor; the man who had been accustomed to deal with tangible things, to acquire his power by blood and by intrigue, and to hold it with an armed hand; what did he know of such a kingdom as this? To his eyes, Jesus stood as a mystic, as a harmless enthusiast, bewildered with abstractions; and he cries out—"What is Truth?" "What has that to do with this matter, or with me?" Little did he know the breadth, the glory, the permanence of that kingdom of the truth which even from the cross to which he was about to doom the Victim, should stretch from land to land, and from age to age, erecting its sovereignty in every true heart, and achieving conquests wherever that sublime answer should be read, long, long after his throne and the throne of the Cæsar whom he served, should have crumbled into dust. But harmless or dangerous, innocent or guilty, he saw that

this Jesus was the occasion of a tumult which disturbed the peace of the state and threatened his own interest—and he investigated no farther. He measured the facts by his own standard. Christ was guiltless, and he would save him. He was guiltless, but Pilate was willing to compromise. He was guiltless; but then, that clamor was disagreeable. He was guiltless; but if his life was to stand against Pilate's private interest, he must die. He was guiltless; but what was one man's existence compared with the peace of the Roman state? Evidently, the Right here was impracticable; at least impolitic. So he would wash his hands of the matter; not by letting the guiltless go, as he could have done if he dared, but by a little protestation and ceremony; and then, "willing to content the people," he "released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified."

Whatever may be the individual peculiarities of this class, then, through all its varieties there runs this common trait—that, lifted above the degradation of appetite, they are just level with the horizon of sense. The man of the world does not rise above the circle of routine into the sphere of absolute relations, where the transactions of life appear colored by moral distinctions and mixed with endless issues. He does

not feel a superior influence throbbing through the iron arteries of the earth. He does not see the permanent meanings that brood behind these forms and shadows. The arc of his thought is no wider than the angle of his perception. His ideal is the world in itself and the world as it is. In short, I say the whole when I remark that the man of the world has no genuine faith in the great realities of religion. He may cherish a traditional belief, and give an outward expression. He may sit in cushioned pews and listen to serious discourses. But the sinews of his practical life are not mated with spiritual sanctions. These are distant and dim, belonging to the regions of the angelic and the immortal, but having no actual relations to time and matter. Nothing is real except that which can be coined into money, or used as a symbol of distinction or an instrument of power—while he does not detect God's presence hemming him about, and searching his heart, in the work-shop, the counting-room, the social circle, and the legislative hall.

Let us remember, then, that while there is a comprehensive sense in which we may be men of the world, as thoroughly knowing it, and wisely using it; there is a sense in which too many live as only level with its policy and inspired by its spirit. And how shall it be with

us? Shall we be masters of the world or only its adherents? Shall we see beyond it, or only within it? Shall we descend into it from nobler heights, from holier points of action, and pass through it as employing its discipline, ministering to its needs, and triumphing over its evil; or shall we be absorbed in it, overwhelmed and crushed by it, and conformed only to its ideals? Shall we, with Jesus, while living in the world in our profoundest and truest life, be not of it; or, with Pilate, shall we know only its policy and glory, and find nothing but its insufficiency and defeat.

# NICODEMUS:

## THE SEEKER AFTER RELIGION.

## V.

## NICODEMUS: THE SEEKER AFTER RELIGION.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night.—JOHN iii. 1, 2.

ALTHOUGH we have but few glimpses of Nicodemus in the Gospels, he is a personage of peculiar interest. A Pharisee, and a member of the great Jewish Senate, or Sanhedrin, he shows us that the influence of Christ was not limited to the poor and the obscure; but that, while his Words and Works awoke enmity and fear among the higher classes, they struck, in the breasts of some of these, a holier chord.

It may not be certain that Nicodemus ever openly confessed Christ; yet, in this chapter, he appears in the attitude of a disciple, and we find him defending Jesus before the Sanhedrin, and assisting at his burial. Still, unless the last-mentioned act be considered as such, we do not discover, in his conduct, that public and decisive acknowledgment which the Savior requir-

ed; we do not behold the frank avowal of Peter, or the intrepidity of Paul. There is an air of caution and of timidity about him. He carefully feels the ground of innovation, before he lets go the establishment; and, indeed, he appears to have taken no step by which he forfeited his caste or his office. It is difficult, too, to discover the precise purpose of this visit to Jesus. Perhaps he sought the interview, from mixed motives. A religious earnestness, kindled by the teachings and the character of Christ, may have blended with speculative curiosity, and even with the throbbings of political ambition. His coming by night, too, may have indicated timidity, or he may have chosen that season as the best time for quiet and uninterrupted discourse. But, whatever may have been his motives, the position in which we find him, shows, I repeat, that the power of Christ's ministry was felt, not only by the excitable multitude, but by the more thoughtful and devout of the Jewish people.

Nicodemus, however, presents a peculiar interest, not only because he exhibits the influence of Jesus upon the higher orders of his nation, but because he appears as a *Seeker after Religion*, and as one personally interested in its vital truths. His interview with the Savior, gives occasion for one of the most important

passages in the New Testament. The conversation of Christ, in this instance, is not uttered in general principles and accommodated to the multitude, but it is directed to an intelligent and inquiring spirit, in the calm privacy of the nighttime, laying bare its very depths, and craving the application of religion to its own peculiar wants. To be sure, Nicodemus did not profess this want, but commenced the conversation with the language of respect, and with suggestion of more general inquiry. But he who "knew what was in man," had already penetrated the folds of the Ruler's breast, and saw the real need that had sent him; so, putting by all compliments, and all secondary issues, he struck at once the conscious chord that throbbed there, and exclaimed: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God!" These words must have filled Nicodemus with surprise, both from their sudden *heart-searchingness,* and as addressing to him a term which was usually applied to men of very different condition. For the phrase, "*new birth,*" was a customary one to express the change through which the Gentile passed in becoming a Jew. But it was indeed a strange doctrine that he, a son of Abraham, a Pharisee, a Ruler, must be born again, before he could be fit for the Messiah's kingdom. There-

fore, really or affectedly, he misunderstood the Savior's words, and gave to a phrase, plain enough when applied to a heathen, the most gross and literal interpretation. But Christ reiterated the solemn truth, assuring him that an inward change, and an outward profession, a regeneration of the affections and the will, and a renunciation of pride and fear, by the symbol of baptism—a new birth of water and of the Spirit—was essential to true discipleship. And thus, stripping away all the reliances of formal righteousness, and all the supports of birth and position, in reply to the earnest question of Nicodemus: "How can these things be?" the great Teacher proceeded to utter some of the sublimest doctrines of the Gospel. As I have already said, whether Nicodemus became an avowed follower of Jesus, or not, is uncertain; but we know that the truths which he then heard, are of everlasting importance, have a personal application to every man, and appeal to wants in our own souls, which are as real and as deep as those of the Ruler of old.

But while thus Nicodemus exhibits a need of our common humanity, he especially represents a class who may be called "Seekers after Religion," either as being unsettled and inquiring in their spirits, or as resting upon something which is not Religion, but only, perhaps, a ten-

dency toward it—they are seekers after it, as not having actually found it. In other words, for this class, Religion has its meaning and its pressure; they think about it, and they feel its claims, yet they do not thoroughly and experimentally know it; or, like Nicodemus, they rest upon some substitute. Some of these positions, I propose now to illustrate.

I observe, then, in the first place, that some seek Religion in *Rituals* and *Sacraments*. The tendency of the human mind, as to matters of faith and devotion, has always been to complicate, rather than to simplify, and to associate these with set forms and symbols. In all ages, men have shrunk from naked communion with God, from the solitude of an intense spirituality, and have conducted transactions with the Invisible, through the mediation of ceremony. But that which, at first, was an expression of the individual soul, has grown into a fixed and consecrated Rite. Gestures and modes of worship, suggested by the occasion, have been repeated in usage, and grown venerable with age, until they have become identified with Religion itself. They have been exalted into mystic vehicles of Grace, have been considered as possessing virtue in themselves, and as constituting an awful paraphernalia, through which, alone,

God will deign to communicate with man, and through which man may even propitiate and move God. Christianity has not escaped this tendency; and, even now, there are many with whom the Sacraments are something more than expressive signs and holy suggestions, and with whom the position of an altar, the shape of a vestment, and the form of a church, are among the *essentials* of Religion. With such, Baptism speaks, not merely to the eye of an inward washing, but it is of itself a regenerative process. In their view, the Communion Bread is not simply a representation of the broken body of the Redeemer; but is itself so sacred, so identical with that body, that they must receive it by a special posture, and upon a particular part of the hand. As a matter of course, to such, Religion must appear eminently conservative and retrospective; the genius of the established and the past, rather than of the reformatory and the future. Cherishing the minutest fibres of these ancient rites, they chiefly venerate the men who authenticate them, and the soil out of which they grow. With them, the fluent spirit of Religion became organized and fixed into a form, with fast-days and feast-days, with mitre and cassock, and a lineal priesthood, ages ago.

It cannot be said that this method is entirely unfounded. It has its justification in human nature, if not elsewhere. There are those who can find peace only in the arms of an hereditary Faith: who can feel the inspiration of worship only among forms that have kindled worship in others for a thousand years: with whose earliest thoughts and dearest memories is entwined a Ritual and Established Church, so that personal affection and household sanctity, as well as religious feeling, demand that every great act of life—of joy or sorrow—should be consecrated by the familiar sacrament. For that church, too, their fathers have died in darker times, and beneath its chancels, sainted mothers moulder into dust. All, too, that can exalt the ideal, or wake the pulses of eloquent emotion, is connected with such a church. To them it opens a traditional perspective, the grandest in all history. Behind its altars, sweep the vestments of centuries of priests, and rises the incense of centuries of prayer. In its stony niches, stand rows of saints, who have made human life sublime, and who, through all the passing ages, look down upon the turmoil of that life with the calm beatitude of heaven; while its flushed windows still keep the blood-stain of its own martyrs, plashed against it ere yet it had become an anchored fact, and while it tossed upon

the stormy waves of persecution. I can understand, then, how an imaginative and reverential mind can find the truest religious life only in connection with Ritual and Sacrament.

I can understand, moreover, the re-action in this direction, which is taking place at the present day. It is the retreat of the Religious sentiments from the despotism of an imperious reason. It is the counter-protest of loyal affections against what is deemed an anarchical tendency. It is the clinging of men's sympathies to the concrete, alarmed by the irreverent and analytic methods of science. It is the retirement of faith and devotion to those cloistered sanctities that shut out the noise of the populace, and the diversions of the street. It is the reluctance of taste and imagination at our new and varnished Protestantism, with its bare walls, its cold services, and its angular churches, of which one wing, perchance, rests upon a market. and the other upon a dram-shop. Especially would I not deny the profound spiritual life, the self-sacrifice, and the beautiful charities which have consisted at all times, and which consist in the present time, with this Ritual and Sacramental form of Religion.

But when men claim that this alone is the genuine form—that these are essentials of the only true Church—then I deny that claim. If

it fills some wants of our nature, it repudiates others equally authentic. If one class of minds find peace only under its consecrated shadows, others find no satisfaction but in the discipline of a spontaneous devotion, and the exercise of an individual reason. If it suffices for men like Borromeo or Newman, it does not suffice for men like George Fox, or Channing; and the religion of these is as evident, in their simple spirituality, as of those in their mystic symbolism. When it sneers at the Puritan, then I must vindicate that rugged independence of soul, that faithfulness to the individual conscience, that sense of the Divine Sovereignty, which could kneel at no man's altar, and to God alone; which sacrificed all things for the right, but yielded not a hair to the wrong; which could find no medicine for the spirit in Sacraments, but only in the solitude of the inner life; and which has, under God, wrought out this noble consummation of modern times, whereby others may plant their vine of ritual under the broad heaven of toleration, and have liberty to sneer. When the Ritualist deprecates the ultraism and irreverence of the Anti-formalist, I must urge the tendency of his own principles to mummery and absolutism. And, finally, when he falls back upon Tradition, I must fall back upon the Bible. The spirit of the New Testament

is not that of Rituals or Sacraments; and the universal sentiments of the Old are not. The prophet Isaiah, who exclaims: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; your new moons, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth. . . . . Wash you, make you clean . . . . . cease to do evil, learn to do well!" joins with the Apostle, who says that Christ "blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances . . . . nailing it to his cross," and that no man should judge us in meat or drink, or times, or seasons. And, surely, there is no argument for forms or places in those Divine Words, which declare that "God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

We cannot deny, then, that pure religion may consist with Rituals and Sacraments; we cannot deny that it may exist without these. But I insist upon this point: that the Sacrament, the Ritual, is not, itself, Religion. It may be a beautiful sign—it may be a quick suggestion—it may be a medium of spiritual influence; but, alone, it cannot take the place of inward, personal piety, of right affections and an obedient will. No punctilious form can stand substitute for a vigilant conscience; no posture of devotion can supply the place of living deeds; no ascetic mortification can atone for guilt; no

auricular confession can speak, instead of the breathings of repentance, in the ear of God, and out from the depths of the solitary soul. He who relies upon these forms, and finds sanctity only in them, may be sincere, may be serious about religion, but as yet he is only a *Seeker;* and, speaking to his heart with all-penetrating meaning, comes to him the decree: "Ye must be born again."

Again; there is a class who seek Religion in *Philosophy.* They believe in God, by a course of reasoning. They believe in immortality, because it is a conclusion rivetted in their minds by the iron links of induction. They pray, or not, according as it seems logical to do so. They would be good, because goodness is useful. But every proposition upon which they act, must first be strained through the alembic of the intellect, and must stand out in the clear definition of science. They verify and build up their religion with callipers and dissecting-knife. It is a system of digestion and pneumatology. They find an organ for veneration, and another for conscientiousness, and therefore conclude that religion has a legitimate place in the harmony of human character. But all must be calm and balanced. They dare not trust the feelings, and give but little scope to enthusiasm.

Sometimes, indeed, they rise to eloquence in expatiating upon the truths of natural theology, and of "the elder scripture;" though they believe in Christ also, because he seems well authenticated as an historical Fact. In short, such men are religious like Cicero, or Seneca, with some modification from modern science, and from the Sermon on the Mount.

Now there is a close alliance between true Philosophy and true Religion. That the New Testament is eminently free from fanaticism, and makes no appeal to mere credulity, any one will see who examines. That it is rational and sober, constitutes one of its great internal evidences. A Christian Philosopher is no anomaly, but a beautiful expression of the essential harmony of all truth. Knowledge and Piety burn and brighten with an undivided flame. Revelation and Science are continually interpreting one another, while every day the material universe is unfolding a more spiritual significance, and indicating its subservience to a spiritual end. But, after all, in order to be religious, it is not necessary that a man should be a philosopher, and it is certain that often he is a philosopher without being religious. Religion and Philosophy may coalesce, but they are two different spheres. Philosophy is out-looking and speculative; Religion is inner and vital. In

the scheme of Philosophy, Religion is reasoned out as a consequence, and adopted as an appendage to character. In the true scheme, it is the central germ of our being, the controlling force of life. The religion of Philosophy consists of right *views* of things, and a prudential schooling of the passions. True Religion consists in a right state of the affections, and a renunciation of self. In the one case, Religion may "play round the head, but come not near the heart;" in the other, it breaks up the great deep of conscience, and pours an intense light upon the springs of motive. Philosophy contains the idea of intellectual rectitude; Religion, of moral obedience. Philosophy speaks of virtue; Religion, of holiness. Philosophy rests upon development; Religion requires regeneration. In short, we make an every-day distinction between the two, which is far more significant than any verbal contrast. It is the one, rather than the other, that we apply, in the profounder experiences of our moral nature, in the consciousness of sin, and in the overwhelming calamities of life. The one pours a purifying, healing, up-lifting power into the homes of human suffering, and into the hearts of the ignorant and the poor, that the other has not to bestow. Philosophy is well, under all circumstances; but it is not the most inner element of

our humanity. Religion, in its humility, penitence, and faith—at the foot of the cross, and by the open sepulchre—rejoices in a direct and practical vision, to which Philosophy, with its encyclopædia and telescope, cannot attain.

Under this head, too, may be ranked a class of men who, though they may not be exactly philosophers, fall into the same conception of Religion, as a matter of the intellect—as the possession of correct views—rather than a profound moral life. They estimate men according to what they believe, and attribute the same sanctity to the Creed that others attribute to the Ritual. And as Religion, in their conception of it, consists in a series of correct opinions, the great work should be an endeavor to make men think right. So the pulpit should be an arsenal of controversial forces, incessantly playing upon the ramparts of dogmatic error, with the artillery of dogmatic truth, and forever hammering the same doctrinal monotony upon the anvils of logic and of textual interpretation. They are satisfied if some favorite tenet is proved to a demonstration, and go forth rejoicing in the superiority of their "views," without asking if Saving Love has melted and transfigured their own hearts, or whether personal sin may not canker in their souls, if hereditary guilt is not there. Now, it is true that great

principles lie at the foundation of all practical life, and the more elevated and clear our views, the more effectual are the motives to holiness and love. But it matters little to what pole of doctrine the intellect swings, if the heart hangs unpenetrated and untouched. It matters little to what opinions in Theology the pulpit has made converts, if all its mighty truths have not heaved the moral nature of the hearer—if it has not shot into the individual soul, like an arrow, the keen conviction: "I must be born again!"

Once more: there are those who seek Religion in a routine of outward and commendable deeds—in mere *morality*. With such, the great sum of life is to be sober, chaste, humane; laying particular stress upon the business-virtues, honesty, industry, and prudence. In their idea, that man is a religious man who is an upright dealer, an orderly citizen, a good neighbor, and a charitable giver. To be religious, means to do good, to keep your promises, and mind your own business. They tell us that benevolence is the richest offering, and that the truest worship is in the workshop and the field—that a man prays when he drives a nail or ploughs a furrow, and that he expresses the best thanksgiving when he enjoys what he has got, and is content if he gets no more.

Now, the world is not so bad that there is not a good deal of this kind of religion in it. It would be unjust to deny that many golden threads of integrity wind through the fabric of labor; that there is a strong nerve of rectitude holding together the transactions of daily life, and a wealth of spontaneous kindness enriching its darker and more terrible scenes.

But, after all, these easy sympathies, and these prudential virtues, lack the *radicalness* of true Religion. Religion cannot exist without morality; but there is a formal morality which exists without religion. I say, a *formal* morality; for essential morality and essential Religion are as inseparable as the sap and the fruit. Nor is morality a mere segment of religion. It is one-half of it. Nay, when we get at absolute definitions, the two terms may be used interchangeably; for then we consider religion presenting its earthly and social phase, and we consider morality with its axis turned heavenward. But, in the case of these outside virtues, which are so common, we behold only one-half of religion, and that is its earthly and social form; and even this lacks the root and sanction of true morality. For the difference between the morality of a religious man and that of another, consists in this: with the one, morality bears the sanctions of an absolute law, and God is at its centre. It is

wrought out by discipline, and maintained at all cost. With the other, it is an affair of temperament, and education, and social position. He has received it as a custom, and adopted it as a policy; or he acts upon it as an impulse. With the one, it is a matter of profit and loss, or a fitful whim of sentiment. With the other, it is the voice of a divine oracle within, that must be obeyed; it is the consecrated method of duty, and the inspiration of prayer. Now, to say that it makes no difference about the motive of an act, so long as the act itself is good, indicates that very lack of right feeling, and right perception, which confounds the formal morality of the world with religion. For, in the distinctions of the Christian System, the *motive* makes the deed good or bad; makes the two mites richer than all the rest of the money in the treasury; makes the man who *hates* his brother a murderer. The good action may bless others, but if I do not perform it from a right motive, it does not bless me; and the essential peculiarity of religion is, that it regards inward development, individual purity, personal holiness—so that one essential excellence of the good deed consists in its effect upon the agent—consists in the sinews which it lends to his moral power, and the quantity it adds to his spiritual life. When, from a right motive, with effort and sac-

rifice, I help a weak and poor man, I enrich my individual and spiritual being. If I bestow from a mere gush of feeling, I receive no permanent spiritual benefit; if from a bad motive, I impoverish my own heart. Acts, then, which appear the same thing in form, differ widely, considered in their *religious* bearings. There is the morality of impulse, the morality of selfishness, and the morality of principle, or religious morality. The motive of the first-named, we obey instantaneously, and it may do good, just as we draw our hands from the flame, and thereby obey a law of our physical nature, though we act without any consideration of that law. A great deal of the morality in the world is of this kind. It may do good, but has no reference to the law of rectitude. It is impulsive, and, therefore, does not indicate a steadfast virtue, or a deep religious life. For the very impulsiveness that leads to the gratification of the sympathies, leads to the gratification of the appetites, and thus we often find generous and benevolent characteristics mixed with vicious conduct. Then, as I have said, there is the morality of selfishness. In this instance, I may perform many good actions from sheer calculation of material profit. I may be benevolent, because it will increase my reputation for philanthropy. I may be honest, because "honesty

is the best policy." But is this the highest, the religious sanction of morality? No: the morality of the religious man is the morality of *principle.* The motive in his case is not "I will," or "I had better," but "I ought." He recognises morality as a law, impersonal, overmastering the dictates of mere self, and holding all impulses in subservience to the highest good. The morality of impulse is uncertain. The morality of policy is mean and selfish. The morality of religion is loyal, disinterested, self-sacrificing. It acts from faith in God, and with reference to God.

But another trait separates the religious from the merely formal moralist. It consists in the fact that with him, "*morality,*" as we commonly employ the term, is not all. Piety has its place. His affections not only flow earthward, but turn heavenward. He not only loves his neighbor as himself, but he loves the Lord his God. He not only visits the widows and the fatherless in their affliction, but he keeps himself unspotted from the world. With him, toil *is* prayer, and contentment *is* thanksgiving, but because he infuses into them a spirit of devotion, which he has cultivated by more solitary and special acts. With him it *is* a good thing to live honestly, industriously, soberly; but all life is not outward, is not in traffic and labor, and

meat and drink. There is an inward world, to which his eyes are often introverted—a world of spiritual experience, of great realities and everlasting sanctions—a world behind the veil—a holy of holies in his soul, where rests the Shechinah of God's more immediate presence; yea, where he meets God face to face. And it is this that directs his public conduct. The orderly and beautiful method of his life is not the huddled chance-work of good impulses, is not the arithmetic of selfishness; but it is a serene and steady plan of being projected from the communion of the oratory, and the meditation of the closet.

Again, I say, let us not depreciate morality. Let us condemn that ostentatious piety which lifts up holy hands to God, but never stretches them out to help man—which anoints its head with the oil of sanctity, but will not defile its robes with the blood of the abused, or the contact of the guilty—which is loud in profession and poor in performance—which makes long prayers, but devours widows' houses. Let us condemn this, but remember that this is not real religion, only its form; as, often, the kind deed, the honest method is not true morality, only its form. Of both these departments of action, let it be said: that these we have done, and not

left the other undone. Let us recognise the perfect harmony, nay, the identity of religion and morality, in that One who came from the solitary conflict of the desert, to go about doing good, and who descended, from the night-prayer on the mountain, to walk and calm the troubled waves of the sea.

But those who rest in a mere routine of kind and prudential deeds, need the deeper life and the inner perception which detects the meaning and gives the sanction to those deeds. Such need the vital germ of morality—the changed heart, the new birth.

And as I have spoken of a subordinate yet somewhat distinct class who may be ranked under the general head of seekers after religion in philosophy, let me here briefly allude to some with whom religion is a matter of mere sentiment and good feeling. Such are easily moved by the great doctrines of the New Testament. They are affected by the sermon; they have gushes of devout emotion during the prayer. But with them, religion is not a deep and steady pulse of divine life. Prayer is not a protracted aspiration—is not a habit. They feel well towards God, because they consider him a good-natured, complacent Being; but they do not meditate upon the majesty of His Nature, upon His Justice, and His Holiness. From the doc-

trine of immortality they draw consolation, but not sanctity. They regard it as a good time coming, but it furnishes them with no personal and stringent applications for the present. They need a more solemn and penetrating vision; a profounder experience in the soul. They need to be born again.

Then, again, there are those who may be called *amateurs* in religion. That is, they are curious about religious things. They like to speculate about it, to argue upon its doctrines, and to broach or examine new theories. They go about from sect to sect, and from church to church, tasting what is novel in the reasoning, or pleasing in the manner of the preacher; in one place to-day to hear an orator; in another to-morrow to hear a latter-day saint; it is all the same thing to them. All they want with religion is entertainment and excitement. They are Athenians, ever seeking some new thing. They smack at a fresh heresy as if they were opening a box of figs, and are as delighted with a controversy, as a boy with a sham-fight. They have no fixed place in the Church universal. They are liberalists, without any serious convictions, and cosmopolites without any home affections. In fact, to them religion *is* a sham-fight—a matter of spectacle and zest—not a

personal interest, or an inward life. They would seek Jesus by night, because they hope to learn something wonderful or new, and would be startled to hear his solemn words tingling in their hearts: "Ye must be born again!"

Nay, my friends, would not these solemn words startle many of us? It may be, we have never made any inquiry concerning religion—have never even come to Jesus, as it were, by night. Such, with their barks of being drifting down the stream of time, have never asked the meaning of their voyage, or reckoned their course; nay, perhaps they live as though religion were a fable, as though earth were our permanent abiding-place, and heaven a dream. If such there are, they have not even listened to the Savior's words. But there are others among us, perhaps, who are interested in the subject of religion, who are in some way or another engaged in it; but who are restless seekers after it, rather than actual possessors of it; who are resting upon insufficient substitutes for it. And I ask, would not these words, breaking forth from the lips of Jesus, startle us in our ritualism, our philosophy, our outside morality, our sentimentalism, or our mere curiosity? And do they not speak to *us?* Are they not as true now as when

they struck upon the shivering ear of Nicodemus? Do they not make us feel as intensely our obligation and our religious want, as he might have felt there, with the wind flitting by him as though the Holy Spirit were touching him with its appeal, and with the calm gaze of the Savior looking into his heart? Do they not demand of us, resting here awhile from the cares and labors of the world, something more than mere conformity, or intellectual belief, or formal deeds? Do they not demand a new and better spirit, a personal apprehension of the religious life, a breaking up and regeneration of our moral nature, a change of heart?

# THE SISTERS OF BETHANY.

# VI.

## THE SISTERS OF BETHANY.

And Jesus answered, and said unto her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."—LUKE x. 41, 42.

A SERIES of discourses upon Characters in the Gospels, cannot well be completed without reference to "the Sisters of Bethany." That argument for the truth of the New Testament narrative, which is drawn from the vividness and naturalness of its personages, is strikingly illustrated in the impression left upon us by these. One of the most masterly achievements of genius, in works of fiction, is the creation of individuality, and the maintenance of strict consistency in character. This is accomplished only by minute description and variety of incident. Yet here there is only a casual lifting of the veil, and Mary and Martha stand before us, never to be mistaken or forgotten. They appear upon the scene but two or three times;

there is not the least attempt at portrait-painting; but the simple evolution of facts presents them as separate, and as self-consistent in their individuality, as any two persons that we see about us every day.

The traits which constitute this difference, are easily defined. Martha presents us with all the elements of a bustling, practical life—industry, calculation, and thrift. To her, this tangible world afforded a complement of cares and duties, and the plane of her solicitude ran through no higher sphere. The appeal of earthly interests was incessant, and her thoughts soared into no region that lies beyond the diligence of the hands. There is no mistaking the evidence, in her character, of good-heartedness and hospitality, and a degree of religious faith. She respected the Redeemer, and acknowledged his claims. But, after all, her leading traits are those of a vigorous and officious worldliness. Her activity and her zeal lacked the loftiest elements, and were not inspired by the highest motives. Her individuality is inseparable from a thousand outward things, and does not stand before us complete and serene in its own inner sufficiency.

On the other hand, Mary impresses us with the influence of a meditative and devout spirit, living in the world, fulfilling the duties that call for

her, yet deriving her true life from sources far above the world. Her's was an ideal mind, communing with the unseen, acquainted with spiritual realities, quick to apprehend higher good—and expecting it. Yet we may believe that she neglected no practical claim, but, rather, was peculiarly sensitive to every obligation. As all her work lay before her in the sacred order of duty, it was comparatively easy, and left her free from embarrassments and intrusive cares. Fulfilling each task in its season, she redeemed time to seek that higher inspiration by which even the lowliest thing is best done. Perhaps, moreover, to her spiritual vision, this world absolutely had not so many, nor such pressing claims as appeared to her sister. The scale of her up-reaching thought reduced the size of these earthly interests, taught her to reject many superfluous cares, and made the rest more concise and less peremptory. To say the least, Mary was evidently one of those characters who cause us to overlook what they do, in the consideration of what they are. Her life, her own inner being, was of such a quality that we chiefly notice *it*, whether manifested in words, in deeds, or in silent expression. She sat at the feet of Jesus, for her appropriate sphere was in the region of aspiration and receptivity. Her heart was a censer of devout

breathings, and her whole being vibrated to holy influences, like a harp. It seems to be the mission of such natures, not so much to act, as to shine in their own calm brightness, like planets, reflecting upon us a light which has been poured into them from unseen urns. But, wherever they move, their *presence* is felt; man's heart grows better for the time, and his sins lie still, while, through the rank and seething atmosphere of earth, they impart glimpses and suggestions of heaven.

These peculiar characteristics of the two sisters, and the differences between them, appear in the scene connected with the text. Jesus enters the house of Mary and Martha, and we behold on the part of the latter, welcome, hospitality, and respect. She evinces these, by her ostentatious endeavors to serve Jesus. Mary, on the other hand, honors him by an expressive evidence of her sense of the greatness and rarity of the opportunity which his presence afforded her: and she left her sister to serve alone, that she might sit at his feet as a disciple. To him, this was a more grateful testimonial than the most sumptuous banquet.

Again: both these sisters grieved at the death of their brother Lazarus. Both were solicitous that Christ should avert that calamity. With

both, no doubt, this anxiety, and this sorrow, were equally sincere. But how different the expression of these sentiments! With Martha, it is likely, the mourning was more of an outcry; with Mary, a more silent but more intense anguish. At least, we see that Martha first heard of the arrival of Jesus. Her careful and domestic habits would naturally lead her into a position where she would catch the tidings before her sister, and her restless disposition would send her more readily to her ordinary work. But Mary's thoughts of sorrow could not thus be turned away, and she sat still in the house. And, again, observe the difference when they met Jesus. It is true, with a singular fidelity to nature, the Evangelist represents both as saluting the Savior with the same words: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" but Martha was able to hold a conversation, while Mary, with her more sensitive spirit, sank at the Redeemer's feet; and while, as he was about to perform the miracle, the one maintained a reverential silence, the other intruded coarsely her practical advice.

After the raising of Lazarus, too, the same differences are strikingly apparent. At the supper in Bethany, Martha served; but Mary took "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his

feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." Each of these offices was well meant; each was a token of heart-felt gratitude. But what a contrast between the literal profusion of the one, and the costly delicacy of the other! These offerings indicate a radical diversity of character—the one, a matter-of-fact nature, material in its conceptions, and engaged in utilitarian interests; the other, a sacred and aspiring soul, seeking some rich symbol by which to express its fervid sentiment, and rendering a tribute which has been consecrated as an everlasting memorial, and which has filled the earth with its fragrance.

Here, then, we have two distinct types of character—of *womanly* character. The one, entangled and perplexed among those cares which especially throng in woman's sphere; the other, regarding these, as it were, from above, and conducting them in the serene and orderly spirit of duty. The one, woman with well-meant aims, but with unconsidered principles of action; the other, woman adorned and guided by the sentiment of religion. The one, woman merely as an earthly seeker and a domestic drudge; the other, woman as an immortal being, unfolding her highest destiny below and above the stars. Nay, Mary and Martha

express that elementary difference of character which may be found in either of the sexes. The difference between an ideal and a merely practical nature; between a devout and an unsanctified spirit; between those who are only of this world, and those who are essentially of heaven; between those whose whole achievement is in what they have got and in what they do, and those whose greatness is in the power, beauty, and harmony of a spiritual life conscious of the Presence, and unfolded by the breath of God.

But I have already sufficiently indicated these differences, and I would say, therefore, that I have selected the Sisters of Bethany, not merely as representing some particular phase or phases of human character, but as suggesting some reflections appropriate to the closing discourse of this series, and which may apply to character in general, and in either sex.

Nevertheless, the first observation which I shall make is, that Mary and Martha, severally, may be considered as representing *Woman with and without the influence of Christianity.* I do not particularly refer now to the influence which Christianity has exerted upon the *outward* condition of Woman. This needs no illustration. That sex which almost alone was friendly to the Savior; which anointed his feet

with ointment, and followed him with tears to his cross; which prepared sweet spices for his burial, and was the first to hail his resurrection, has, in turn, been especially befriended by his Gospel. It has raised her from the degrading condition of a slave, or her still more degrading condition as a mere instrument of passion, to be a refined and purifying influence in society, and to lend to home the dignity and the grace of the mother, wife, sister, and daughter.

But I would specially speak of the needs and the obligations of Woman *in* the sphere where Christianity has placed her. Though she has been rescued from the bondage of brutal and sensual barbarism, and has emerged from the silly admiration of romantic ages, to stand in noble equality by the side of man, still her path is different from his. For, I must confess, that, so far as I understand it, I have but little sympathy with the modern movement for "the Rights of Woman." If it simply asserts her claim to all the privileges which belong to her as a human and an immortal being, there can be no dispute. But if it impugns that system, which allots to her a *different* station from man, I believe that it assaults a great and beautiful law, and makes a demand which the general sentiment of her own sex will repudiate. I refer to that principle of duality which runs

through the universe, dividing every perfect whole into two parts, assigning to each its own necessary work, and rendering this very diversity essential to harmony. It is the duality of day and night, of the leaf and the flower, of the hand and the heart. By virtue of this law, humanity is two-fold, and is perfect only in the man and the woman; each of these having a peculiar sphere. The delicacy of her organization, her peculiar sensibilities, the intuitions which God has planted in her soul, indicate which is *her* sphere. And if she abandons this sphere, there is no one else to fill it, and a wide circle of human want is left empty and desolate. If she abandons this sphere to speculate in the market, to brawl in the caucus, to robe herself with magisterial severity, to lead armies, and to wield the implements of muscular toil, then the spherical unity of life collapses, one side becomes paralyzed and the other monstrous. There may be a class of women of frosty sympathies and intrepid nerves, whose "strong-mindedness" has absorbed almost every other quality, and to whose philosophical comprehension the amenities of life may seem puling and narrow. These may aspire to the control of the forum and of the exchange. But I believe that few, who are really conscious of the true dignity of woman, would consent to such a condition. They recognise

those virtues which are peculiarly woman's virtues, and the necessity of that separate path in which, since they came out together from the gates of Eden, she has walked side by side with man, through the flowers and the thorns; each the equal and the help-mate of the other, because each possesses a different power from the other, thus fulfilling the beneficent design, and corresponding with the universal law of God.

Woman has her own peculiar sphere, then; and, in this sphere, I say, it will be a very different thing with herself, and with those upon whom she acts, whether she is controlled or not by Christianity. This topic opens too wide a field for anything like exhaustive treatment at the present time, but let us attend to one or two general suggestions.

Consider, then, the position of Woman in modern civilized society, and her need of Christianity in this position. It is only in a physical sense that she can be called weak, here. And even this renders her powerful. An instinctive delicacy ministers to her least want. And not only is she protected by the universal presence of law, but by sentiment. In the crowded assembly, an array of household affections engird her, recognising her as the representative of all that is sacred in sister, wife, and mother. She

walks through the streets in safety, for her honor is guarded by a spontaneous chivalry, more potent than a thousand swords. In every respect, woman, in modern society, is not weak, but strong. Her influence may be unobtrusive, but for this reason it is, perhaps, the stronger. Looking abroad upon the world, it is man's action that we chiefly behold in the street, the Senate, or the camp; but how much of woman's control silently mingles with all this! How secretly it winds into the policy of the statesman, and nourishes ambition, and dictates the scheme of wealth! And while, sometimes, she has not hesitated herself to head legions, more frequently she incites heroes. Her voice is the trumpet-charge that rings in the patriot's ear, and her counsels and appeals project that ideal of Liberty which brightens through the bloody mist of battle. But while thus she secretly touches all the springs of public action, there are two departments in which her influence is especially powerful. I allude to the department of *custom* or *fashion*, and to that of *domestic life*. In the former respect, it is not assuming too much to say, that she gives the law, and reigns supreme. Almost every rule of etiquette pre-supposes her presence, and even when it is but an exchange of courtesies between man and man, its tone is modulated by those customs of which she is the

centre. Account for it as we can, we know that a community entirely composed of men, would be a community of sheer barbarians. In a large degree, woman has subdued this rough speech, and checked this fierce selfishness, and converted man from an Arab, or a sea-king, to the methods and amenities of a gentleman. I repeat, fashion assumes its shape, customs take their mould and spirit, under her influence. Her power is great, then, in this by no means insignificant department of society. It depends much upon her, indeed, whether society shall be frivolous or noble, pure or base. If her own mind is weak, and her life trifling: if she lives only in the whirl of excitement and of artificial splendor; if she turns the world into a perpetual ball-room, or theatre; if she makes etiquette of more importance than principle; if she is willing to be the idol of honeyed and unmeaning compliments, a living gew-gaw, a doll made up of rouge, and musk, and lace, a frame to hang flounces on; if she thus moves only through a routine of folly, relieved occasionally by a puff of second-rate sentiment; then we shall see, in all the region round about, a pestilence of nonsense and dissipation. If, too, instead of shrinking from the touch of the libertine, as from the pollution of a charnel-house, she gives him her smiles; if she allows a good coat to excuse in-

temperance, and a mustachioed lip to consecrate profaneness, *she* is to blame if vice prevails in the community, and her responsibility in this respect is deeper than she may be aware. But if not neglecting the dictates of true gentility, not unsolicitous as to the proprieties of a refined taste, she carries into society the intellect, the dignity, the purity of a true woman, we shall have a community as different from the other, as her own ideal and conduct. If woman has this power, then, does not much depend upon the plane from which she views life? Does not much depend upon whether she cherishes material and superficial conceptions of the world and is entangled among its cares and interests, or whether she has often retired from it to clarify her vision with meditation, and to purify her heart with prayer, and to descend into it again with the power of a true, life-giving principle? Is it not of vital importance whether she carries into society the tendencies of Martha, or those of Mary?

But I referred also to woman's power in *domestic* life. I have said that she secretly touches many of the springs that move this busy and scheming world; for these springs are often entwined with the motives, and lie open in the confidence of home. Thus, with her is the secret of many public follies and virtues.

Sometimes, when the man would shrink from a rash speculation, or perhaps, a wrong transaction, she rebukes him for his faint-heartedness, until he plunges headlong into ruin. Sometimes, her love of ease demands that luxury, or her pride, that ostentation which bids him strain every sinew, and forego every scruple, in the toil for wealth, and which exhausts every honest source of revenue. But, on the other hand, in the temptations and disappointments of business, how great is her power to preserve, to console, and to redeem. A power, it may be, not obtrusively exercised, yet for this reason all the more effectual: for how much is there in the mere aspect of a home to cheer the sinking heart, to clear the mind's eye, and to steady the hand. And how much of the business of the world is dictated by home-motives. How much of this daily toil is the endeavor of the strong arm and the manly will, in behalf of trusting and dependent woman. And, when we view it in this light, the market relaxes something of its sordid look, and the face of toil is lighted with a sacred expression. Work, then, does not all appear a selfish scramble, but often, as a sacrifice at the shrine of human affection, and the crowds that pour forth in the morning and return at night, are daily processions of love and duty.

But while thus we detect the action of woman

upon society, through the opportunities of home, there is one region of her influence which can never be left unnoticed. I allude, of course, to her agency as a *mother*. Talk of the power that wields sceptres, and sways senates, and dashes in the front of victorious battles; why, the germ of all sprung up within her guardianship, and is unfolded by the breathings of her thought. And, when we realize this, when we remember how she comes in contact with the earliest fluctuations of the will, with the intelligence, when it is yet nebulous, with the whole spirit of the future man, long ere it has crystalized; we feel that a mother's influence is inextricably interwoven with his destiny. Is it an indifferent matter, then, whether her own spirit is peevish, vexed with cares, and clouded in its perceptions, or whether the holy power of religion controls and guides her?

We have been considering woman's need of Christianity in her influence over others: how much more does she require it for herself. She is called upon to accomplish not only the gentle mission of love, but of endurance; and those inward springs of consolation which qualify her to minister to the troubled mind, and to watch by the sick-bed, she requires for her own strengthening. The whirl of excitement which sweeps through the out-door world, and into

which man plunges so eagerly, passes her by and leaves her much alone. The frivolities of mere fashion lose their zest, as duty and sorrow set their seals upon her heart; flattery, which at best is but a breath, subsides with youth and beauty; and nothing can be more wretched than a worldly-minded woman, left thus with nothing but the memory and the expectations of this earth. Or, if she is not left alone, her's is peculiarly a sphere of many cares. Often, alas! she is linked to brutality and passion, to poverty and toil. For her, frequently, are desertion and shame. The vials of a morose or acid temper are emptied upon her head—she suffers, alternately, the violence and the maudlin humor of a debased husband, or must buffet with the stern hostility of misfortune. Oh! the heroes of history wear wreaths of fame about their bleeding brows; but who shall unfold the records of woman's martyrdom, traced in tears, hidden in silence, beneath countless roofs. And how shall she meet this trouble of many things? With the perplexed, unbalanced mind of Martha; or with the upward-looking, serene spirit of Mary?

But I proceed to draw from the suggestions of the text, one or two reflections applicable to phases of character and of life, in both sexes. I observe, then, in the second place, that Mary

and Martha furnish an illustration of the different qualities of *Reason* and *Faith*. It is the office of the intellect to busy itself about many things, but the heart desires to rest upon a few simple and sacred convictions. Nay, even the intellect must start from these. The most rigid methods of science are built upon realities which cannot be scientifically defined, but which lie as a ground-work of intuition in the soul. For instance, the philosopher must have confidence in the rectitude of his own mental faculties—must rely upon his reason before he takes a step in the way of reasoning. He must have confidence too, in the prevalence of law, and the intrinsic harmony of truth. However logical our induction, the end of the thread is fastened upon the assurance of faith. And while I cannot deny the splendid achievements of intellect, but rejoice in it as one of the grand elements of our immortal growth, yet it seems to be one of the most important offices of this very intellect, to bring us, in the end, to a simple confidence in certain central truths which our investigation never invalidates, and which all the highest powers of our nature confess and demand. I think that any man, just in proportion to the depth of his culture and the amount of his knowledge, will feel the necessity of this faith. For, after all his discoveries, he does not

get rid of mystery. He finds that while the objects of his youthful conviction are more variously illustrated, and become more grand in the wider horizon of his educated mind, they still retain their claims upon his belief. The telescope and the microscope have revealed nothing that renders them less trustworthy, or less necessary. Nay, to him they appear even more necessary. It is true, the scope of his vision has stretched into immensity, and many a riddle of early speculation has been solved. But out among these majestic realities of the universe, the need of an Infinite Father and an immortal life, seems far more urgent. The cold brightness of innumerable worlds, the boundless depths of silence in which they lie, bewilder and appal him. With nothing but the light of reason to assure him, he feels insignificant and alone, and gladly falls back upon the elements of the simple prayer, with which he laid him down to sleep when an unlettered child. Mysteries spring upon him from every quarter. The moment he determines to define all things, and to trust in nothing that his intellect cannot grasp, he finds himself tossed upon a flood of perplexity. In many instances, his intellect may be invigorated and delighted, but then he is a man, not all intellect, but warm with affections, yearning with immortal desires; and these cry

out for a harbor, cry out for some axis of assurance on which to rest, and not drift and drive forever: and he finds, after all, that there is a sufficiency in this Bible, a meaning in its simple oracles, such as the perplexed mariner finds in the compass, such as the pilgrim knows, when amid the uncertainties of his journey, he discovers a sign of guidance and a spot of repose. The intellect must come back to the best convictions of the heart—it must have a central rest—however eccentric the arc, however wide the radius of its explorations.

The truth which I have now endeavored to enforce, forbids me to fear any assaults upon Christianity, which may be made at the present day. In its restlessness with theories, its dissatisfaction with new methods, the mind of man will gladly return to the moral and personal revelation of the New Testament. Man is not all intellect. Faith has its functions and its authority. And of these, we must first rely upon the latter. Intellect, busy and troubled about many things, never can find absolute truth, and its wider discoveries are not all necessary. But faith gives to our hearts the one thing needful. It assures us of things we must know; what we are, whither we are tending, and in whose hands we are held.

There are times, moreover, when we cannot

reason, when our souls are too much troubled to pursue any fine series of investigation, when with torn and bleeding affections, with our dead in our arms, we stumble in the valley of the shadow of death, and we need some simple prop of trust on which to lean. Diligent as Martha, let the intellect ever be—anxious about many things—but let faith, like Mary, abide in the innermost shrine of the heart, calmly sitting at Jesus' feet.

Finally, I observe that Mary and Martha represent the general difference between *earthly perplexity and heavenly rest;* between the confusion, the vacillations and uncertainties of an unreligious spirit, and the peace, distinctness, and order of a religious one. There are many illustrations of this distinction, some of which have already been suggested. But let me ask you to consider the advantage in life, which that man who acts from the simple direction of duty, possesses over one who acts from policy. The former escapes many perplexities which beset the latter. In every line of conduct he has to consult but one criterion, and that is the standard of absolute right. But the man of policy often finds himself where two roads diverge—the one may be the way of immediate gain, the other is the strait path of rectitude.

He halts, he hesitates, he is teased by suggestions, and very likely chooses the former, to find in the end, that he has only increased his perplexity. The other may sometimes lose reputation, or money, by his loyalty to duty, but he never loses presence of mind, and all his course lies before him in beautiful simplicity. Well is it said, that "the wicked are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest." There is the conflict with conscience, and afterward the rebuke of conscience; the thirst for unlawful gain, and then the disgust upon finding its comparative worthlessness, and the mingling of regret with enjoyment, like the ashes at the core of the Dead Sea apples. But he who has sat at Jesus' feet, and walked in the guidance of his spirit, enjoys rest, the rest of an approving conscience, and the intrinsic reward of rectitude.

Again, consider the perplexity which comes from ungoverned appetites and passions. He who surrenders himself to their impulses, is ever plunging from indulgence into remorse, and is ever lashed by the consciousness of self-degradation, and the remonstrances of his better nature. And the more he gratifies these propensities, the more they demand, until his life is divided between brutish indifference and inward torment. But religion, like the law of gravity, binds each element of our nature to its own

orbit. It gives the peace of a harmonious character, where the moral and intellectual powers hold their lawful spheres, and the appetites fill their restricted place, and the law of purity and holiness reigns supreme. The religious man is not without his conflicts against temptation, but he always enjoys the consciousness of good endeavor, and his peace, when it ensues, is not the peace of surrender, but of victory.

Of the rest, which comes from faith, from trust in religious truth, from communion with God, I have already spoken. And I have said enough to enforce the illustration which I draw from my subject—enough to show that in that highest condition of human nature which religion induces, there is a certain serenity and strength, such as Mary evinced—a peace of God that passeth all understanding. While a spirit that has not this inner guidance and control, a spirit that acts from no higher level than the world, is always "troubled about many things," and, in its perplexity, betrays its need and its weakness. After all, in the silence of Mary, there is an impressiveness of power which does not appear in all the tumult of Martha. And it will be found that peace is an attribute of the highest power. The most boisterous talker is generally the feeblest thinker. The pompous philosopher is apt

to be a quack. Silence reigns throughout those enormous spaces where worlds travel on their way. Silence wraps that electric life which animates nature, and which is thus more powerful than when it is disclosed in thunder. A sea of silence lies around the throne of God, and the Almighty speaks not and utters no sound. So in this peace of a religious soul, there is evidence of a hidden power that is greater than any outward force. Mary is stronger in her still, meditative posture, than Martha in her anxious toil.

Religion, then, my friends, is "the one thing needful;" it gives us a grace, and life, and central peace, which we must have, whatever else we may lack. We may fail in prosperity, we may be destitute of friends, we may lose health, but what are all these compared with the spirit of duty, the consciousness of integrity, and a true trust in God?

And while, in this brief series of discourses, I have led you to consider some diversities of character, I shall be glad if the lesson afforded by all, shall be impressed upon your hearts, that the source of all real defect as well as guilt, lies deeper than mere temperament, or station, or intellectual culture—in the springs of moral action, in the depths of our spiritual nature, and

that the essential remedy, the absolute need of all is in the life and energy of Religion, of faith, and holiness, and love.

And, as I close, I would say that, if we have seen, in any of these phases of character, a mirror of our own, let us not stifle the conviction; let us honestly accept the instruction, the warning, and the rebuke, and let us rejoice that God has given us the power of repentance, and offers us the help of His Grace. That power, let us not neglect; that Grace, let us not slight.

Among all who have occupied our attention, John, with his wild prophet-garb, lifting the cry of Reform; Herod, with his sensual eye and mocking lip; Thomas, with his doubt breaking away in conviction; Pilate, with his complacent and unscrupulous policy; Nicodemus, marvelling at the intensity of true Religion and the deep requirements that it makes; Martha, cumbered with much serving, and Mary rejoicing in the sacred privilege of discipleship; among all these stands one Figure, peculiar and alone, the central Character of the Gospels, which no pen can delineate, no tongue adequately describe. In the glory of his Divine Authority, in the tender sympathies of his humanity, his meek face turned in mingled love and pity, his raiment stained with travel, the sick looking up in his

path, and the common people listening to him gladly—there he stands. His hands are stretched out for deeds of mercy; are stretched out invitingly to each of us. For years he has spoken to us, urging us to follow his example, to make his spirit our law. Has that call any meaning for us? Have we heeded it? Or is it lost in the tumult of the world? If so, God grant that in these Sabbath-hours, when we have turned to that Divine history, perhaps to see our own moral features reflected in the personages that have passed across the scene; God grant that in these hours some influence may have reached us, which shall move us to go to Jesus' feet, and hear him say: "Ye have chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from you."

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